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Old friends in the new world : Russia and Iraq from Gorbachev to Putin, 1990-2003

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OLD FRIENDS IN THE NEW WORLD:
RUSSIA AND IRAQ FROM GORBACHOV TO PUTIN,
1990-2003

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Mediterranean Studies Programme
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of Iraq in Russian foreign policy from the first Gulf crisis in 1990 to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. In particular, it identifies the main internal and external factors influencing Moscow's policy toward Baghdad, as well as Russia's objectives in this country.

The aim of the thesis is twofold. On the one hand, it is to use the historical study of Russian-Iraqi relations to illustrate the evolution of Russian foreign policy throughout the 1990s, to provide an understanding of the mechanism of Russia's foreign policy formation and to highlight the interplay between domestic and foreign policies. On the other hand, the objective is to provide a new perspective of Russian policy in the Middle East by focusing on Russian-Iraqi relations as a means of drawing conclusions about the Moscow's Middle East policy in general.

Despite a large volume of academic work, both in the West and in Russia, on Russian policy in the Middle East during the 1990s, no study focuses exclusively on Russian-Iraqi relations. The thesis therefore fills this knowledge gap by providing a detailed study of bilateral relations between the two countries. By identifying the variety of factors that influenced Russia's policy toward Iraq, the thesis hopes to provide a new perspective on Russia's relations with Iraq away from the simplistic explanations of Russia's pro-Iraqi stance, towards the complexities of Moscow's international and international policies.

The thesis integrates events in Russian domestic politics and developments in the international fora, in particular the United Nations Security Council, focusing on the role of the United States, Britain and France in influencing and

shaping Moscow's approaches to Iraq. It argues that Russia's Iraq policy is primarily a function of Russia's relations with the US and the only place where the Moscow's and Washington's interests are not simply at cross-purpose, but essentially in rigid opposition to each other.

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INTRODUCTION

‘I can’t remember when for the last time since the fall of the Berlin Wall, events abroad became the main domestic issue. But last week heated debates took place among the politicians with regard to the far and not the friendliest Arab state, where a regime sympathetic mainly to Zhirinovsky is in power. The possibility of U.S. strikes on Iraq and death of the civilian population caused a political activism and upheaval in the political establishment that was not observed even when thousands of Russians were dying in Chechnya.’

Vyacheslav Nikonov, *Epoch of Changes*¹

Even though the Middle East has never played a primary role in Russia’s foreign policy, since tsarist times the region has been viewed as an important instrument in Moscow’s policies towards the Great Powers, in particular Britain, and later the U.S. As one of the most volatile regions in the world, the Middle East was of particular importance as a scene of strategic competition between the USSR and the U.S. during the Cold War, and remains a hotspot of international politics today.

Throughout the Soviet era, Moscow’s policy in the Middle East was dictated by its overall global objectives, namely the general weakening of the West followed by its replacement with Soviet influence, and marked by opportunism skillfully concealed under the veil of the communist ideology.² While intent on avoiding a war that could potentially trigger a nuclear conflict with the West, Soviet policy in the region aimed at the ultimate elimination of

¹ Vyacheslav Nikonov, *The Epoch of Changes: Russia in the Eyes of a Conservative*, (Moscow: Languages of Russian Culture, 1999), p.711

² *Report by Joint Intelligence Committee on Soviet Foreign Policy*, 15 December 1969, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Documents on British Policy Overseas, JIC(A)(69)41 Final, pp. 200-205; Malcolm Mackintosh, ‘Soviet Foreign Policy’, *The World Today*, Vol. 24, №4, April 1968, p. 146

Western military power and political influence, especially in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, while increasing the Soviet capacity to threaten or control Western oil, mineral sources and transportation routes.

In addition, with the expansion of the Soviet navy in the 1960s, in particular with the establishment of the Mediterranean Squadron in 1964-65, the traditional Soviet strategic interest in the region, the protection of the access routes to the USSR from the south, was complemented by the broader strategic considerations of becoming a major power in the Mediterranean and gaining access to the Indian Ocean via the Suez Canal.³ Moscow's ambitions constituted part of the struggle for strategic parity with the U.S. and were determined by the goal of securing a permanent and direct access to those areas where the USSR had major interests and commitments.⁴ This could be achieved by exploiting tensions between the West and its allies in the region, using the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Indo-Pakistani dispute and wars in the Horn of Africa to create Soviet influence over the entire region,⁵ as well as by transforming the Arab countries into revolutionary states adhering to communist ideology.

However, in the long-term the most effective instrument for achieving Moscow's objectives proved to be the economic and military assistance to its Middle Eastern clients. Whereas under Stalin assistance was provided exclusively to countries declaring themselves socialist, after his death the new Soviet leader,

³ Ciro Zoppo, 'Soviet Ships in the Mediterranean and the U.S.-Soviet Confrontation in the Middle East', *Orbis*, Vol. XIV, №1, Spring 1970, pp. 119-120; Curt Gasteyger, 'The Super-Powers in the Mediterranean', *Survival*, Vol. XVII, №6, November/December 1975, pp. 272-73

⁴ T.B. Millar, 'Soviet Policies South and East of Suez', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 49, №1, October 1970, pp. 71-72; Alvin Z. Rubinstein, 'Soviet Policy Toward the Third World in the 1970s', *Orbis*, Vol. XV, №1, Spring 1971, pp. 109-110

⁵ A. Gorokhov, 'The Struggle of the Soviet Union for the Elimination of War Hotbeds, for International Security', *International Affairs* (Moscow), №7, (July 1970), p. 6-7; R. Petrov, 'The Soviet Union and Arab Countries', *International Affairs* (Moscow), №11, November 1972, pp. 22-29

Nikita Khrushchev, extended Soviet aid to those states who distanced themselves from the Western camp without subscribing to communism. Even following the modification of this ambitious and unsustainable policy by Leonid Brezhnev in the mid-1960s, during which time aid was only provided to those countries that offered a practical advantage to Soviet national interests, assistance was still available to 'progressive' countries in the Middle East classified as important clients, notably Syria, Libya, Yemen, Algeria and Iraq.⁶

Given Soviet objectives in the Middle East, Iraq throughout the Cold War era occupied an important place in Moscow's policies in the region. Emerging as a major regional player of anti-Western orientation in the 1950s,⁷ rich in oil and in need of industrialisation, Iraq at an early stage appeared an ideal tool for the attainment of Russia's objectives.⁸ Not only did Baghdad allow the Soviet Union to consolidate its presence in the Middle East, but it also proved a useful bargaining instrument in the hands of Moscow when dealing with the West, and particularly the U.S.

Despite its major successes in the Middle East, by the early 1980s Soviet policy in the region began to stagnate. Not only did the prolonged war between Iran and Iraq strain Soviet diplomacy,⁹ but also its clients' pronounced turn to the West for better quality weapons and commercial goods, apparent since the mid-

⁶ For a comprehensive account of Soviet policy in the Middle East during that period, Amnon Sella, *Soviet Political and Military Conduct in the Middle East*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1981)

⁷ For detailed account of Iraqi politics see, for example, Majid Khadduri, *Independent Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since 1932*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1951); and *Republican Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since the Revolution of 1958*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Edmund Ghareeb, 'Iraq in the Gulf', in Frederick W. Axelgard, (ed.), *Iraq in Transition: A Political, Economic and Strategic Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986); Stephen H. Longrigg, *Iraq 1900 to 1950: A Political, Social and Economic History*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953); Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985)

⁸ Oles Smolansky, *The USSR and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*, (London: Duke University Press, 1991)

⁹ Fancine Lecours, 'L'URSS face à la Guerre du Golfe: une Stratégie Singulière', *Études Internationales*, Quebec, Vol. 17, №4, (December 1986), pp. 785-800

1970s,¹⁰ created competition Moscow found hard to match. In addition, far-reaching domestic reforms, *perestroika*, introduced by Mikhail Gorbachov following his accession to power in March 1985 in an attempt to halt the economic erosion of the Soviet state meant a substantial shift of Soviet foreign policy priorities towards creating favourable external conditions for internal restructuring.¹¹

This study of Russia's Iraq policy takes as its start point Gorbachov's accession to power and concludes with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003. In view of the dramatic transformation in Russian foreign policy in the late 1980s, the first Gulf crisis of 1990-91 can be viewed as a new point of departure in Moscow's external strategy and a 'year zero' for a new period of Russian foreign policy. The beginning of the war in Iraq in 2003 and Russia's de facto exclusion from participation in Iraqi affairs signifies the end of its policy towards one of its most important Soviet-time allies. Despite the evolution of Moscow's approach to Iraq throughout the 1990s, Russia's policy towards Baghdad from 1990 to 2003 is marked, as this thesis will show, by a distinct set of strategies and objectives, allowing it to be viewed as one distinct period in Russian-Iraqi relations.

Even though there is a large body of scholarly literature on Russian policy in the Middle East, little work has been dedicated specifically to Moscow's relations with Iraq during the 1990s. While Soviet policy in Iraq is well documented in the context of the Cold War, to date, no comprehensive study has been undertaken on Russia's Iraq policy in more recent times. Furthermore, no

¹⁰ Edward M. Kennedy, 'The Persian Gulf: Arms Race or Arms Control', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.54, №1, October 1975, p. 20

¹¹ Mikhail Gorbachov's speech in the Kremlin at the meeting with the participants of the International Forum for a Nuclear-Free World, for the Survival of Humanity, TASS, 'Learn the Art of Living in Peace', *Pravda*, 17 February 1987, p. 2

academic study has so far used Moscow's policy towards Baghdad as a case study for the examination of Russian foreign policy.

This thesis fills this lacuna by providing a detailed historical account of Russia's policy towards Iraq from 1990 to 2003 and by offering a new perspective on Russia's policy in the Middle East. At the same time, a rigorous examination of the available historical evidence and documents aims to highlight the complexities of Russia's Iraq policy, challenging simplistic explanations of Moscow's pro-Iraqi stance.

This thesis will also show that as one of the most contested issues in Russia's foreign policy, Iraq provides an excellent example for understanding post-Soviet Russia and can be used to examine and conceptualise Russia's foreign policy in this period. It allows analysis of the country's political landscape and interest groups, identifying the main factors impacting on foreign policy, as well as understanding the process of policy-making. At the same time, this study will demonstrate that Russian-Iraqi relations cannot be viewed solely on the bilateral level, but rather as a function of Moscow's relations with the U.S. It will show that despite its significant economic interests in Iraq, Russia was prepared to trade Baghdad for U.S. silence on Chechnya, a free hand in Georgia, and, more generally, recognition by Washington of the post-Soviet space as Russia's sphere of influence. By using a variety of Russian and Western sources, this study hopes to shed light on the motivations, but also on constraints of the main political players involved in determining Russia's Iraq policy, providing new insights lacking in previous historical studies on the topic.

Iraq as an object of study

Following the disintegration of the USSR in December 1991, Iraq continued to play a special role in Russia's Middle Eastern policy for a variety of reasons. First of all, as this thesis will demonstrate, Iraq throughout the 1990s remained one of the most contested issues in Moscow's foreign policy and more than any other country of the region became an indicator of Russia's policy in the Middle East. On the domestic level, Iraq has highlighted the debates on foreign policy orientation and illustrated the disorganisation in Russian foreign policy-making. It revealed the dynamics of various interest groups within Russian politics and their impact on foreign policy formation. On the international level, Iraq highlighted Moscow's position in the global arena and remained an instrument in Russia's relations with the United States.

Of course, there were still the other two main Soviet allies in the region - Syria and Libya - but Damascus had lost its important place in Russia's foreign policy agenda after the collapse of the USSR, not least because it refused to recognise the Russian Federation as a legal successor to the Union in order to avoid debt repayment.¹² Even though an agreement was later reached and military-technical co-operation revived, Syria never regained its former status in Russia's Middle Eastern policy. Similarly, Russia's relations with Colonel Qaddafi, a long-standing, but 'unpredictable' Soviet ally,¹³ had declined as a result of U.N. economic sanctions against Tripoli following Lockerbie bombing, which Russia voted in favour of. Although the government's position on Libya caused heated debates, mainly because of the financial losses accrued as a result

¹² Alexei Pushkov, 'New Tales of Old Damascus', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 25 October 1992, p. 12

¹³ Dmitry Zgersky, 'The Colonel is in Trouble as We are...', *New Times*, n. 15, April 1992, p. 19

of the embargo,¹⁴ the issue did not remain as major and constant factor in Russian domestic and foreign policies as Iraq.

There was, of course, Iran, which since the collapse of the USSR, assumed an increasingly important role in Moscow's foreign policy due to the new geo-strategic situation in the south.¹⁵ But economic, technical and military co-operation with Tehran that caused frequent tensions with the U.S. was primarily due to Iran's regional conduct, such as a partnership with Russia in conflicts around Tajikistan and Afghanistan, co-operation on the division of Caspian Sea resources, an alliance against Turkey's policy in Transcaucasus and Central Asia, and later Iran's non-interference in Russia's conflict with Chechnya.¹⁶ As such it was never a contested issue within Russian politics.

Conceptualising Russia's foreign policy

Much has been written by Russian and Western scholars about the nature of the Russian transformation in both domestic and foreign policy. However, the existing theories of International Relations prove unsuitable for the explanation of the disintegration of the USSR and Russian foreign policy, which in the 1990s has been marked by an 'essential ambiguity'.¹⁷ On the one hand, they fail to explain the reasons for the collapse of a political and socio-economic system that was equal to its rivals in military terms in the absence of a significant international

¹⁴ Vladimir Skosyrev, 'With one End on Libya, with the Other on CIS', *Izvestia*, 31 March 1992, p. 6; Vadim Iputev, 'Libya is Keeping the Doors Open. Russia is Trying to Slam Them Shut. Why?', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 1 December 1992, p. 6

¹⁵ For a detailed account of Russia's relations with Iran in the early 1990s, Alvin Z. Rubinstein, 'Moscow and Tehran', in Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Oles M. Smolansky (eds.), *Regional Power Rivalries in the New Eurasia*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 31-61

¹⁶ Gillian Tett, 'Pragmatism Rules in Tehran over Chechnya: Iran is Keen to Maintain Good Relations with Russia', *Financial Times*, 27 January 1995, p. 8; Leonid Mlechin, 'Iran is Ready to Forget Chechnya for the Sake of Friendship with Moscow', *New Times*, September 1995, p. 45

¹⁷ Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 265

military conflict.¹⁸ On the other hand, neo-realism, as the prevailing international relations theory, falls short of explaining the nature of Russian transformation because it views the internal processes as irrelevant for international relations.¹⁹

For the examination of Russia's policy towards Iraq this thesis uses an approach which focuses on internal factors as the main determinants of foreign policy and highlights the increasing politicisation of Moscow's foreign policy during the 1990s.

Compared with the Soviet period the importance of foreign policy relative to domestic politics has dramatically decreased in Russia since the 1990s. In the face of a deep economic and political crisis, policy-making became highly reactive and lacked strategic vision. As Bobo Lo pointed out, one of the most important features of Russian foreign policy became its 'sectionalised' character, 'with the country's political elite deeply divided over underlying concepts and values, policy priorities, and the means with which to realise them'.²⁰ The absence of a generally accepted idea of national interest²¹ led to the emergence of opposing political camps and interests groups eager to influence the conduct of foreign policy in accordance with their beliefs and values.²²

¹⁸ P. Allan, K. Goldman, (eds.), *The End of the Cold War*, (London: , 1992); J.L. Gaddis, 'International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1992-93

¹⁹ Kenneth Waltz, 'Neorealism: Confusions and Criticism', *Journal of Politics and Society*, Vol. XV, 2004, p. 3; Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 31

William C. Wohlforth, 'The Russian-Soviet Empire: A Test of Neorealism', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 27, 2001, pp. 213-235

²⁰ Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 8

²¹ For the analysis of the evolution of the state identity in the foreign policy of Russia on the theoretical level and application of the underlying concepts to the major Russian official foreign policy documents, Alla Kassianova, 'Russia: Still Open to the West? Evolution of the State Identity in the Foreign Policy and Security Discourse', *Europe - Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, №6, pp.821 - 839

²² For a study of a conflict in foreign policy values and its impact on Russia's relations with the external world, Leszek Buszynski, *Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, (Westport: Praeger, 1996)

This resulted in a foreign policy that lacked cohesion and a sense of orientation.²³ While disagreements over foreign policy were used by the opposition as a means of undermining President Yeltsin and his government, Yeltsin himself used foreign policy issues to either appease his opponents or indicate a particular course in Russia's domestic politics. At the same time, the Yeltsin government was eager to demonstrate that Russia had re-emerged from the crisis of the early 1990s and despite its economic difficulties was re-gaining its position as a great power. In this context, the concept of 'multi-polarity' became the favourite idea of the Russian government, which refused to acknowledge, at least publicly, U.S. supremacy in international affairs.²⁴

Despite the process of de-ideologisation of foreign policy, various new ideologies appeared and came to play a central role in setting the foreign policy agenda.²⁵ While the "Atlantists" emphasised integration with the West, "Eurasianists" advocated the ubiquity of Russia's national interests and diversification of the country's foreign policy.²⁶ At the same time, the Russian political establishment continued to perceive foreign policy in predominantly geopolitical terms²⁷ as a zero-sum game, conditioned by a balance of power and

²³ The renowned Russian political analyst and member of the Presidential Council, Andranik Migranyan, in 1994 characterised the essence of Russia's foreign policy as 'vanity, improvisation, incompetence, and as a result the rush from side to side'. A. Migranyan, *Russia in Search of Identity*, (Moscow: International Relations, 1997), p. 387; also Robert Legvold, 'Russia's Unformed Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, №5, September/October 2001, pp. 62-75

²⁴ Andrei Kozyrev, 'Russia and the US: Partnership is Not Premature, it is Overdue', *Izvestia*, 11 March 1994, p. 3; Yevgeny Primakov, 'Multipolar World on the Horizon', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 22 October 1996, pp. 1,5; Igor Ivanov, 'Thousandth Session of the UN: Moscow's Foreign Policy', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Dipskurier* (supplement), №1, 20 January 2000, p. 1; also National Security Concept, signed by President Putin on 10 January 2000, available online at: <http://www.russiaeurope.mid.ru/russiastrat2000.html>, viewed on 10 November 2006

²⁵ Sergei Medvedev, *Power, Space and Russian Foreign Policy in Understandings of Russian Foreign Policy*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp. 15-57

²⁶ Alexei Pushkov, 'Russia and America: the Honeymoon is Over', *Foreign Policy*, № 93, Winter 1993-94, pp. 77-82

²⁷ For example, Konstantin Sorokin, *Particularities of Russia's Geopolitical Situation in the Contemporary World*, (St. Petersburg: The Russian Geographic Society, 1995), pp. 17-18; Dmitri

spheres of interest. In spite of attempts to diversify Russia's foreign policy, Moscow's policy remained largely centred on the West, taking the U.S. as its principal point of reference. Under president Putin, Russia's foreign policy, despite a newly set agenda and the announced shift towards the primacy of economic goals, underwent only cosmetic rather than substantive changes. It retained its geopolitical outlook, Western-centrism, and remained reactive, lacking a realistic long-term vision for the attainment of Russia's foreign policy objectives.

Tracing the stages of Russian foreign policy from 1990 to 2003, this study on Iraq clearly highlights the above debates concerning the country's foreign policy and the main factors that led to collapse of Moscow's relations with Baghdad.

Literature review

Among the works that provide an understanding Soviet and Russian policy in the Middle East, especially in the political, economic and military spheres, are those by Karen and Adeed Dawisha²⁸, Walter Z. Laqueur²⁹, Aaron S. Klieman³⁰, Galia Golan, Catherine Kaminsky³¹ and Simon Kruk, as well as excellent studies by Oles Smolansky³², Haim Shemesh³³, Francis Fukuyama³⁴ and Ronald McLaurin³⁵.

The ideological aspects are particularly well developed by George Lenczowski

Trenin, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border Between Geopolitics and Globalisation*, (Washington: The Brookings Institution Press, 2002), pp. 187-188

²⁸ Adeed and Karen Dawisha, *The Soviet Union in the Middle East: Policies and Perspectives*, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983)

²⁹ Walter Z. Laqueur, *The Soviet Union in the Middle East*, (New York: Praeger, 1959)

³⁰ Aaron S. Klieman, *Soviet Russia and the Middle East*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970)

³¹ Catherine Kaminsky and Simon Kruk, *La stratégie soviétique au Moyen Orient*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988)

³² Oles M. and Bettie M. Smolanski, *The USSR and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*, Duke University Press, 1991)

³³ Haim Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations 1968-1988: in the Shadow of the Iran-Iraq Conflict*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992)

³⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The Soviet Union and Iraq since 1968*, Maryland, 1980

³⁵ Ibid.

and Jaan Pennar.³⁶ Many of the studies are based on the theory of the balance of power, which became popular during the Cold War and, in particular, in the beginning of the 1980s, when it became fashionable within academia to analyse bilateral relations and conflicts from this perspective. Thus, the majority of Cold War Russia experts viewed relations between the Soviet Union and Iraq merely as a means for the establishment of equilibrium of power, or for the Soviet dominance in the Middle East.

Robert Freeman distinguishes between those who viewed the main Soviet goal in the region as an offensive one, namely to dominate the Middle East in order to deny its oil, strategic communication routes and other assets to the U.S. and its allies, and others who believed Soviet objective to be the defensive one – the prevention of the region from being used as a base for an attack on the USSR.³⁷

A different point of view was presented by Alexei Vassiliev, a Russian journalist who having spent thirty years working on the problems of the Middle East, distinguishes two concepts that mark Soviet policy in the Middle East - Messianism as a concept of salvation at the core of the Soviet state's ideology after the October Revolution and pragmatism as a reaction to realities in the world arena, determined by the need to prevent, or at least to reduce any military or strategic threat from the South and to weaken Western positions in the region.³⁸

Vassiliev argues that although the ratios of pragmatism and mythology had altered with time, the thinking and the behaviour of the Soviet leaders was still imbued

³⁶ George Lenczowski, *Soviet Advances in the Middle East*, (Washington: American Institute for Public Policy Research, 1971); Jaan Pennar, *The USSR and the Arabs: The Ideological Dimension 1917-1972*, (London: C. Hurst, 1973)

³⁷ Robert O. Freedman, *Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East since 1970*, (New York: Praeger, 1975), p. 1

³⁸ Alexei Vassiliev, *Russian Policy in the Middle East: From Messianism to Pragmatism*, (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1993)

with Messianic ideas that distorted both the priorities and the concrete actions of that policy.

In his study, Mark Heller characterises the relationship between the USSR and the Middle East as 'more in the nature of a bargain', whereby Moscow exchanged its political, military and economic support of its regional allies for 'political and ideological support for the USSR against the US-led imperialism.'³⁹ The end of the Cold War and the transformation of the Soviet Union prompted various studies on the changes in Russian foreign policy, many of which, however, did not specifically refer to the new direction in Russian policy in the Middle East in general, and in Iraq in particular. Galia Golan in her examination of Russian foreign policy under Gorbachov argues that two themes have characterised the new Soviet foreign policy in the Third World, and specifically in the Middle East: the cultivation of more favourable relations with a variety of regimes regardless of ideology, and the emphasis on resolving regional conflicts.⁴⁰ She views the nature of this new foreign policy as 'an indication if not a test case of the depth and significance of the New Thinking'.⁴¹ At the same time, Golan observes that the changes in Soviet policy have been designed 'primarily to please the U.S., and secondarily, the supporters of the *perestroika*, while contending with domestic opponents who sought to enlist public opinion so as to torpedo New Thinking and *perestroika* itself.'⁴² Similarly, Mark Heller argues that the elaboration and implementation of the new foreign policy in Russia appeared

³⁹ Mark A. Heller, *The Dynamics of Soviet Policy in the Middle East: Between Old Thinking and New*, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Post Press, 1991), p. 102

⁴⁰ Galia Golan, *Soviet Middle East Policy under Gorbachov*, Research Paper, Rand/UCLA Center for Soviet Studies, March 1990, pp. v-vii

⁴¹ Golan, *Soviet Policies: From World War II to Gorbachov*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

⁴² Golan, *The Foreign – Domestic Nexus in Gorbachov's Middle East Policy*, Research Paper, (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1997), p. 7

extremely difficult due to the existence of conservative forces within the government, 'whose world-view, self-image and institutional interests were threatened by New Thinking' in domestic, as well as foreign policy.'⁴³

Interestingly, numerous Western studies of the Gulf crisis and war in 1990 -1991 remain silent about the role of the Soviet diplomacy in the conflict, discussing the Soviet position solely in the context of the U.S. policy. Exceptions are the articles by Vladimir Nosenko, Irina Zviagelskaya, Jean-Christophe Romer⁴⁴ and Roland Lomme, which focus on Moscow's diplomatic efforts for the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The body of secondary literature on Russia and Iraq dramatically decreases following the Gulf War and is virtually non-existent for the period from the early 1990s up to the present. The discussions of Russian foreign policy, such as the study by Nikolai Petro and Alvin Rubenstein, dedicate, if at all, just a few pages to Moscow's policy in the Middle East, pointing out that this region while remaining on the Russian foreign policy agenda, is not as important to the Kremlin as Russia's southern tier, Europe and the U.S.⁴⁵ The only more or less complete account of Russia's approaches to Iraq throughout the 1990s is provided by Talal Nizameddin, who using a large number of Russian sources reconstructs the thread of main events between the two countries, as well as the general debates within Russia on the issue of Iraq.⁴⁶

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, the subsequent year saw the revival of the discussion of Russian policy in the

⁴³ Heller, p. 1

⁴⁴ Jean-Christophe Romer, *L'URSS et la Guerre du Golfe*, Stratégique, (Paris: Institut de Stratégie Comparée, 1991)

⁴⁵ Nikolai N. Petro and Alvin Z. Rubenstein, *Russian Foreign Policy: From Empire to Nation-State*, (New York: Longman, 1997)

⁴⁶ Talal Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East: Towards a New Foreign Policy*, (London: Hurst & Co., 1999)

Middle East. In particular the Russian media focused its attention on the topic in the context of heated debates on the war against terror, the so-called 'axis of evil', the disarmament of Iraq, as well as on preparations for war against Baghdad. Nonetheless, no complete study bridging the events of the first Gulf War and the present debates from the Russian point of view has appeared up to this point in time.

This thesis therefore aims to fill this gap by covering the period between 1990 and 2003 and by examining in detail the role of Iraq in Russian foreign policy rather than looking at Iraq merely in the context of Russia's Middle Eastern policy as is the case in the existing scholarly work. Given the lack of availability of official documents for recent years, this study addresses the need to diversify the primary sources by using both Russian and Western open documents together with the press, and supplementing them with a number of memoirs and personal accounts of the most important political players and witnesses to the events. It is hoped that the new perspective taken in this thesis coupled with the use of hitherto untapped sources will provide a better understanding of Russia's foreign policy in general, as well as Russia's Iraq policy in particular.

Structure

The thesis is divided into eight chapters, which in chronological order address the main themes in Russia's Iraq policy from 1990 to 2003, focusing on the role of Iraq in Russian foreign policy, Moscow's strategy at the U.N. Security Council, and the Kremlin's diplomacy on the issue of Iraq with the U.S.

The first chapter, 'Moscow in the Persian Gulf Crisis 1990-1991', examines the transformation of Soviet foreign policy under Mikhail Gorbachov

and its impact on Moscow's policy during the Gulf crisis. It highlights the discrepancy between the requirements of the New Thinking and the actual interests of the Soviet State, focusing on Gorbachov's dilemma between co-operation with the West, and in particular the U.S., and the pursuit of Moscow's traditional interests in Iraq. To Moscow, the Gulf crisis is about much more than Saddam's aggression against Kuwait. It is about the decline of the Soviet superpower status, the emergence of a new international world order and Moscow's search of its place in international affairs, a search that continues up to the present time.

The second chapter, 'Iraq in Russian politics during the first phase of new Russian foreign policy, 1992-1993', focuses on the role of Iraq in Russian domestic politics as the most contested foreign policy issue used by the opposition to undermine the Yeltsin government. Moscow's pro-American stance in international affairs, including the question of Iraq, determined by the need of U.S. financial support for the continuation of the country's economic reforms, fuels the domestic opposition and culminates in a failed coup-d'etat, forcing President Yeltsin to take a more assertive and independent line in foreign affairs, including the issue of Iraq.

The third chapter, 'Russia at the U.N. Security Council during the 1994 Iraq crisis', examines the impact of the Moscow's new assertive foreign policy on its responses to the first major post-Gulf war crisis around Iraq. Russia's position in the UN Security Council on the question of Iraq is compared and contrasted to that of other permanent members, the U.S., Britain, France and China. Despite unflagging diplomatic activities, Moscow's efforts to mediate between Iraq and

the U.N. remain without success, showing Moscow's diminished role in international affairs.

The fourth chapter, 'The politics of trade and diplomacy, 1994-1995', analyses the new dynamism in Moscow's approach to foreign affairs, exemplified by Russia's active engagement in the Middle East Peace Process during 1994, for the first time independently of the U.S. Moscow's newly found assertiveness in foreign policy is also seen in its Iraq policy. Moscow re-establishes bilateral economic co-operation with Baghdad in the hope of obtaining the repayment of Iraqi debts and securing an advantageous position in the Iraq before the end of the embargo. At the same time, Russia steps up efforts at the U.N. to bring about the lifting of sanctions against Iraq.

The fifth chapter, 'Striving for influence: Moscow's diplomacy on Iraq 1996-1997', deals with Moscow's Iraq policy under the new foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov. Under his leadership, Moscow for the first time successfully mediates between Baghdad and the U.N., and for the first time receives international recognition for its diplomatic efforts. However, the limit of Russia's international power is indicated by its inability to accelerate the lifting of sanctions against Iraq.

The sixth chapter, 'Russia and the UNSCOM crisis, 1998-1999', focuses on Russia's relations with UNSCOM and its chairman, Richard Butler. Unable to exercise control over the working of the Commission, Moscow becomes increasingly irritated by the lack of progress in Iraq's disarmament, blaming Butler for the delay in the declaring Iraq free of WMD. Moscow therefore seizes the new confrontation between Baghdad and UNSCOM as an opportunity to dismantle the Commission in the hope of replacing it with a more compliant body.

The seventh chapter, 'Russia's economic co-operation with Iraq, 1996-2000' shows that even though Moscow's political influence on Baghdad had greatly decreased throughout the 1990s, Russia's economic co-operation with Iraq during the same period substantially intensified. Economic co-operation between the two countries developed along three vectors – the conclusion of large-scale contracts, mainly in the oil industry to be implemented after the lifting of the embargo, agreements within the framework of the 'oil for food programme' and illicit deals between Moscow and Baghdad.

The eighth chapter, 'Moscow and operation 'Provide Freedom'', examines key policy drivers at the time of crisis and draws a parallel between Gorbachov's dilemma in Iraq during the first Gulf crisis and Putin's ambition to secure Russia's interests in Baghdad while maintaining co-operation with the U.S. Both Gorbachov and Putin erroneously believed that their personal friendship with U.S. Presidents would allow them to prevent a military confrontation. At the same time, Putin like Gorbachov, and to greater extent, Yeltsin, was greatly constrained in his political choices by the strong domestic opposition against the war in Iraq. While Putin's balancing act allowed him to strengthen Russia's relations with European allies, France and Germany, and maintain the strategic partnership with the U.S., it resulted in Moscow's exclusion from participation in the reconstruction of Iraq, and ultimately, in the loss of Iraq as its economic and political ally.

Sources

The secondary literature on Russian foreign and domestic politics, as well as Russia's policy in the Middle provided a useful background for the present study

and helped to identify the gaps in the existing scholarly work with regard to the understanding of Russian-Iraqi relations and the role of Iraq in Russian foreign policy. On the basis of the existing scholarly research, it was decided to take a new approach by examining Russia's Iraq policy not in the context of Russia's Middle East policy, but as a separate issue in Russian foreign policy that would shed light on Russia's Middle East policy and provide an insight into the post-Soviet Russian politics.

As the events covered in this study are very recent, no access was available to Russian or Western archives. Therefore, the main primary sources used for this thesis were publicly available official documents, press reports, published interviews and radio broadcasts, which were complemented by a variety of Western media reports. After giving it full consideration, it was decided not to use interviews with key players as a source for this thesis for the following reasons: it was highly unlikely that interviewees would have presented a view that would differ from what they have stated publicly, while restricting my freedom to quote their statements. Instead, their published statements were crosschecked in a number of above-mentioned sources to form a balanced opinion of their view of events.

The most important official documents were the statements of the Soviet, and later, the Russian government, as well as statements of the Russian Foreign Ministry published in the main Russian newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. Such statements, responding to a particular event with regard to Iraq outlined Moscow's position and its preferred line of action. Similarly, Declarations of the Russian President, prompted by important developments on the issue of Iraq, focused on the actions undertaken by the President in this matter and spelled out Russia's

desired course of action. In addition, speeches of Soviet leaders at the Supreme Soviet and the CPSU Central Committee, as well as presidential addresses at the Foreign Ministry and other political establishments provided a valuable source for understanding the agenda and the objectives of Russia's foreign policy.

Official UN records, including the transcripts of the Security Council meetings, were used to gain insight into the positions of Russia and other permanent members of the Security Council. In addition, the Royal United Services Institute's (RUSI) web-based Iraq Resources proved an essential source for UN documents on Iraq, including Russia's alternative draft resolutions, but also for a variety of other international documents involving Iraq.

In Moscow, the Lenin State Library was consulted for additional primary sources on Russia and Iraq. Despite a vast amount of references to any thinkable topic, it seemed that the issue of Russian-Iraqi relations was covered in secrecy. Therefore, it was only possible to obtain full text copies of a number of bilateral agreements concluded between Moscow and Baghdad in the period of 1993-1995 (see Appendices). While in Moscow, this author had meetings with some members of the Oriental Studies Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences who having repeatedly travelled to Iraq, provided me with interesting insights of Russia's policy and objectives in that country.

Another major primary source used for this thesis was the Russian and Western media. A large number of Russian daily newspapers, in particular, *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, *Argumenty i Fakty*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and

Mikhail Gorbachov.⁴⁸ His insight was complemented by the memoirs of his foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze,⁴⁹ his personal advisors Anatoly Chernayev⁵⁰ and Yevgeny Primakov⁵¹ who was directly involved in Russia's diplomatic efforts with regard to Iraq, as well as the deputy foreign minister Alexander Belonogov⁵² who provides the most comprehensive account of Foreign Ministry's actions during the conflict.

Boris Yeltsin's memoirs, even though primarily focusing on the personal aspects of his life during his presidency,⁵³ were useful for understanding Russian domestic politics and challenges faced by the first Russian president. Memoirs of Russian politicians, such as the ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy,⁵⁴ the conservative leader Vyacheslav Nikonov⁵⁵ and Yabloko leader Alexander Yavlinsky,⁵⁶ although of varied quality and of the propagandist nature, also contained interesting details on some episodes covered in this thesis.

UN diplomacy on Iraq and his own personal experiences in dealing with Baghdad were best explained in the account of the UNSCOM chairman Richard Butler.⁵⁷ However, his overt bias against Russia and Moscow's objectives in Iraq somewhat diminished the reliability of his work. Among other accounts of UN policy on Iraq, memoirs of the chief arms inspector Scott Ritter⁵⁸ and the

⁴⁸ Mikhail Gorbachov, *Mémoires*, (Paris: Éditions du Rocher, 1997)

⁴⁹ Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991)

⁵⁰ Anatoly Chernyaev, *Diaries of a Presidential Aid*, (Moscow: Terra, 1997)

⁵¹ Yevgeny Primakov, *Years in Big Politics*, (Moscow: Collection 'Very Secretly', 1999)

⁵² Alexander Belonogov, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Kremlin. The Kuwait Crisis*, (Moscow: Olma Press, 2001)

⁵³ Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000)

⁵⁴ Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, *Vladimir Zhirinovskiy Speaks with Russia*, (Moscow: RAYT, 1995)

⁵⁵ Vyacheslav Nikonov, *Epoch of Changes: Russia in the Eyes of a Conservative*, (Moscow: RAUT, 2002)

⁵⁶ Alexander Yavlinsky, *On Russian Policy (Speeches and Articles 1994-1999)*, (Moscow: Epizentr, 1999)

⁵⁷ Richard Butler, *The Greatest Threat, Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Crisis of Global Security*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2000)

⁵⁸ Scott Ritter, *Endgame: Solving the Iraqi Crisis*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999)

UNMOVIC chairman Hans Blix⁵⁹ were also useful. Finally, the memoirs of George Bush Sr.,⁶⁰ James Baker,⁶¹ Bill Clinton⁶² and the Ambassador-at Large and Special Advisor to the Secretary of State on the New Independent States, Strobe Talbott,⁶³ provided a valuable U.S. view of some events discussed in this study.

Summary

Commenting on Russia's policy in Iraq, the former Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev argued that Iraq was a 'litmus test' in Russia's domestic and foreign policies. The intention of this thesis is to demonstrate that Iraq can be used as a means of examining the evolution of Russia's foreign policy throughout the 1990s and a barometer for measuring Moscow's international standing. During the transformation of Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachov, the Gulf crisis was the first test for the viability of the New Thinking and the beginning of a new stage in international relations. During the Yeltsin era Iraq continued to highlight the debates concerning the orientation of Russian foreign policy, emerging as a function of Moscow's relations with the U.S. Similarly, under Vladimir Putin Iraq remained the only place where the interests of Russia and the U.S. were not simply at cross-purpose, but essentially in rigid opposition to each other.

It is hoped that this study will present new insights into Russian domestic and foreign policies from the final year of the Soviet Union to the second term of

⁵⁹ Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2004)

⁶⁰ George Bush, Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998)

⁶¹ James A. Baker, III, *Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace*, (New York: Putnam Pub Group, 1995)

⁶² Bill Clinton, *My Life*, (London: Arrow Books, 2005)

⁶³ Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*, (Random House: New York, 2002)

president Putin and provide a historical background to the understudied Russian-Iraqi relations from the first Gulf war to the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Chapter 1: Moscow in the Persian Gulf crisis 1990-1991

However dangerous the Gulf crisis may be in itself and however important it is to settle, I think we should proceed from the fact that it offers a kind of laboratory, testing our efforts to create a new world order after the Cold War.

President Gorbachov's advisor and special envoy to the Middle East, Yevgeny Primakov¹

While the dynamics of relations between the USSR and Iraq, marked by phases of rapprochement and cooling down, clearly demonstrated the limits of Soviet influence over Iraq and the latter's ability to pursue an independent foreign policy despite the reliance on Soviet arms, it also indicated that despite real differences, Iraq throughout the Cold War continued to regard Moscow as its steadfast ally.² It is not surprising therefore, that failing to detect the scope of the internal transformation of the Soviet state and its impact on Soviet foreign policy, Baghdad, in embarking on the invasion of Kuwait in the early hours of 2 August 1990,³ still counted on Soviet support. This Iraqi aggression was subsequently explained by the inherent sense of insecurity of the Iraqi leader vis-à-vis his neighbours, compelling him to choose war as a last resort,⁴ and by Baghdad's serious financial difficulties in the aftermath of its war with Iran, further aggravated by the sharp drop in world oil prices in spring of 1990.⁵ The

¹ Quoted by Francis X. Clines, 'Gorbachov Sends a Chief Advisor to Iraq in New Diplomatic Effort', *New York Times*, 4 October 1990, p. 14

² For detailed account of Soviet-Iraqi relations from 1958-1988, Oles M. Smolansky with Bettie M. Smolansky, *The USSR and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991)

³ For the complete chronology of the Gulf crisis see BBC World Service, *Gulf Crisis Chronology*, (Harlow: Longman, 1991)

⁴ Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, 'Why Saddam Hussein Invaded Kuwait', *Survival*, Vol. 33, No.1, January/February 1991, pp. 18-19

⁵ The oil price dropped from US\$22 a barrel in January 1990 to US\$16 a barrel by mid-April 1990. 'Oil in the Doldrums', *The Economist*, 21 April 1990, p. 107

underlying motives were also found in Baghdad's long-standing ambition to settle finally its historic claims to Kuwait and obtain much-desired access to the Persian Gulf.⁶

Iraq's belligerent mood, in particular towards the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, which were accused of pushing the oil prices down by disregarding the OPEC production quotas, and Baghdad's intensified propaganda campaign against Kuwait, charged with stealing US\$2.4 billion from the Rumaila oilfield in the disputed border region and refusing to write off its war loans to Iraq,⁷ caused some concern in the Arab world in the summer of 1990.⁸ However, neither Washington nor Moscow saw much reason for anxiety despite the alarming intelligence reports.⁹ Not surprising therefore, that the Iraqi invasion took the world entirely by surprise, triggering the first major international crisis of the early post-Cold War, and putting to test nascent Soviet-American co-operation in the global affairs.¹⁰

For Moscow, the Gulf crisis proved particularly important for a number of reasons. First, it allowed the USSR to test its new foreign strategy, especially its new approach to regional conflicts and co-operation in the framework of international mechanisms.¹¹ Second, it assisted in defining Moscow's role in the post-Cold War world and set an important precedent for its role in future conflict

⁶ Richard Schofield, *Kuwait and Iraq: Historical Claims and Territorial Disputes*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991)

⁷ 'Goodbye Kuwait', *The Economist*, 4 August 1990, p. 49

⁸ In a letter to the Arab League in July 1990, Iraq's foreign minister Tareq Aziz accused both sheikhdoms of a 'direct aggression' against Iraq. 'Saddam's Gulf of Threats', *The Economist*, 21 July 1990, p. 57

⁹ Although later, it was claimed that Saddam Hussein in his conversation with the U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie on 25 July 1990, had given clues as to his intentions. For the transcript of this meeting see, James Ridgeway (ed.), *The March to War*, (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1991), pp. 50-53

¹⁰ The Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, when informed about the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait during his meeting with James Baker in Irkutsk, did not think it possible. See Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991), p. 100

¹¹ Fedor Burlatsky, 'A Tough Lesson to Dictatorship', *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 23 January 1991, p. 1

resolution scenarios.¹² Third, it revealed the main priority of the Soviet foreign policy – cooperation with the U.S. - while exposing the Soviet dilemma between the aspiration to fully integrate into the Western structures and the desire to preserve its own interests, not always identical to those of the West and the U.S.¹³ The Gulf crisis also put an end to the domestic approval and support of Gorbachov's new foreign policy, which previously had been considered the strong side of his government.¹⁴ Finally, it indicated the limits of Soviet influence in Iraq and Baghdad's failure to fully comprehend the impact of the internal transformation on Soviet foreign policy.¹⁵

At the time of the Gulf crisis, the Soviet Union found itself in deep economic decline accompanied by a grave social crisis, requiring far-reaching measures to prevent further decay, and indeed the collapse of the Soviet state.¹⁶ Already on his accession to power in March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachov realised the extent of economic stagnation and was determined to counter it with a policy aimed initially at accelerating economic growth and the large-scale transformation of the qualitative structure of production.¹⁷ However, it soon appeared clear that superficial economic restructuring was not enough to halt the impending crisis, and that simultaneous political and social reform at all levels – *perestroika* - was a

¹² Alexei Vasiliev, 'I Know that You Know...', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 25 November 1990, p. 3

¹³ As revealed by Anatoly Chernyaev, quoting Gorbachov in *Diaries of a Presidential Aid*, (Moscow: Terra, 1997), p. 55

¹⁴ Mikhail Pogorely, 'How the Desert Storm Echoes in Our Hearts', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 8 February 1990, p. 3

¹⁵ For example, Saddam Hussein's speech in Amman, mentioning the Soviet restructuring. Full text in 'Saddam Husayn on the Post-Cold War Middle East', *Orbis*, Vol. 35, № 1, Winter 1991, pp. 117-119

¹⁶ According to the estimates by the Soviet Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economics and International Relations, the USSR in producing a unit of national income was spending 80% more in fixed assets, 60% more in materials, 110% more energy, and twice as much in shipping operations as the U.S. Yevgeny Primakov, 'A Look into the Past and the Future', *Pravda*, 8 January 1988, p. 4

¹⁷ 'Speech by Comrade M.S. Gorbachov, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee at the Plenary Session of the CPSU Central Committee on 11 March 1985', *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, 12 March 1985, p. 3

prerequisite for the successful transformation of the Soviet Union.¹⁸

On the international level, the economic decline of the USSR, brought to surface by Gorbachov, meant that Moscow was no longer able to maintain its present level of strategic competition with the U.S. At the same time, Gorbachov realised that the failure to transform would lead to even greater isolation in an increasingly globalised world.¹⁹ He recognised that the current political and economic system in the USSR prevented it from benefiting from globalisation and technological progress, leaving it lagging behind the industrialised world, and ultimately threatening the Soviet Union's superpower status.²⁰ Instead of Brezhnev's doctrine of peaceful co-existence accompanied by a heavy military build-up to achieve parity with the U.S., the only way of preserving Moscow's position in the changing world appeared to be giving up military competition with the U.S. in favour of a new approach based on non-military instruments.²¹ According to the Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, the main requirement of the new foreign policy was that the USSR

should not bear additional expenditures in connection with the necessity of supporting our [Soviet] defence capabilities and the defence of our legitimate foreign policy interests. That means that we must seek paths to the limitation and reduction of military rivalry, to the removal of confrontational moments in relations to other states, to the damping down of conflicts and crises.²²

¹⁸ Mikhail Gorbachov, 'Restructuring is an Urgent Matter that Affects Everyone and Everything', *Pravda*, 2 August 1986, pp. 1-2

¹⁹ Gorbachov, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, (London: Collins, 1987), pp. 17-25

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Similarly, Michael Mandelbaum argued that while earlier, détente was undertaken for offensive motives, in the late 1980s, the overriding purpose became defensive. 'Ending the Cold War', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, №.2, Spring 1989, p. 18

²² Speech at a meeting of the Diplomatic Academy on 27 June 1987, *Vestnik Ministerstva Inostranykh Del SSSR*, 26 August 1987, p. 31

The primary task of the country's foreign policy, therefore, consisted in developing favourable conditions abroad to assist domestic restructuring, while minimising the damage caused by its weakened position.²³ This could be achieved first by strengthening the international mechanisms, which would allow the Soviet Union to maintain its influence and act as an equal partner of the West at a cheaper price, while preventing the U.S. from approaching world problems unilaterally. Second, by abandoning ideological baggage, namely rejecting ideological struggle with the U.S. and thus, assistance to burdensome clients in the Developing World. Third, by advocating the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts, which would reserve a leading role for the USSR as a mediator, avoid costly military commitments, and the reduce competition with Washington without a loss of face.²⁴

The first step in this direction was the announcement of the end to the arms race with the U.S. In his political report to the 27th Communist Party Congress in February 1986, Gorbachov acknowledged that 'no state can defend itself using solely military-political means' and that 'ensuring security is becoming more and more a political task,' achievable only by political instruments.²⁵ Therefore, there appears to be 'no alternative to co-operation and interaction among states... especially with the U.S'.²⁶

²³ Gorbachov's speech in the Kremlin at the meeting with the participants of the International Forum for a Nuclear-Free World for the Survival of Humanity, TASS, 'Learn the Art of Living in Peace', *Pravda*, 17 February 1987, p. 2

²⁴ Director of the Department of International Organisations at the Foreign Ministry, Andrei Kozyrev, 'Regional Conflict: Co-operation and Competition: Paper 1', in *The Strategic Implications of Change in the Soviet Union, Part II, Adelphi Paper* 248, Winter 1989/90, pp. 45-48

²⁵ The Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union by General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov, *Pravda*, 26 February 1986, p. 2

²⁶ Ibid.

At the same time, particular attention was paid to the revival of the United Nations as a new forum for the pursuit of the Soviet interests.²⁷ Since 1984, the USSR had not exercised its right of veto in the Security Council, and in 1988, Moscow set about to liquidate its debts for the U.N. peacekeeping operations by paying US\$25 million.²⁸ On the rhetorical level, the United Nations was hailed as a 'place of joint search for a balance of various contradictory, but real interests of today's nations.'²⁹ Closely linked with co-operation at the U.N. and Soviet concepts of creating a comprehensive system of international security, was the Soviet effort to promote peaceful settlement of conflicts in Namibia, Angola and Cambodia.³⁰

Interestingly, these measures on the part of the USSR were not presented as retreat under the U.S. pressure, but rather as concessions to 'common sense'.³¹ Emphasis was placed on the need to new approaches to international affairs free from old stereotypes and dogmas 'inherited from the past.'³² The theoretical underpinning for these policies was provided by the concept of New Thinking, a term coined by Gorbachov's close collaborator, Alexander Yakovlev, in 1987.³³ It was based on the assumption that the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction would leave 'no winners' in case of a nuclear war, making peaceful

²⁷ Kozyrev stressed that the USSR was seeking to 're-define its U.N. membership in order to promote its domestic and foreign policies in the spirit of the New Thinking and in a manner that will serve the Soviet national interests'. 'The New Soviet Attitude toward the United Nations', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 13, № 3, Summer 1990, p. 41

²⁸ USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Foreign Policy and Diplomatic Activity of the USSR, April 1985-October 1989', *International Affairs (USSR)*, № 1, 1990, p. 56

²⁹ Gorbachov's speech on the occasion of the opening of the 42nd session of the U.N. General Assembly, 'Reality and Guarantees of a Secure World', *Pravda*, 17 September 1987, p. 1

³⁰ Richard K. Herrmann, 'Soviet Behaviour in Regional Conflicts: Old Questions, New Strategies and Important Lessons', *World Politics*, Vol. 44, №. 3, April 1992, pp. 454-57

³¹ Primakov, 'A New Philosophy of Foreign Policy', *Pravda*, 10 July 1987, p. 4

³² TASS, 'Learn the Art of Living in Peace', *Pravda*, 17 February 1987, p. 2

³³ Primakov, *Years in Big Politics*, (Moscow: 'Collection Very Secretly', 1999), p. 45

co-existence a vital requirement for the 'survival of mankind.'³⁴ While recognising the 'unprecedented' diversity of the world, the new principles emphasised the global interconnectedness and interdependency, which constituted an integral whole.³⁵ Security of some could therefore not be achieved at the expense of the security of others. Closely linked with the concept of interdependence was the notion of human values and morality, which constituted the new criteria for the Soviet behaviour.³⁶ The 'human factor', 'directly invading world affairs' was regarded as one of the main elements of the new political thinking.³⁷

However, the internal transformation and the sweeping changes in the Soviet international strategy did not mean changes in the Soviet global objectives. Whereas the theoretical framework was newly reconstructed, the requirements of practical policy remained unchanged. The extension of the Soviet power, the limitation of the American influence and the elimination of pretexts for the U.S. military involvement in any part of the world remained the ultimate objectives of the Soviet foreign policy agenda.

Not surprising therefore that a new crisis in the Persian Gulf caused by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait revealed the discrepancy between the requirements of the New Thinking and the actual interests of the USSR. In an attempt to reconcile its objectives, the Soviet policy of 'sympathetic neutrality' therefore followed two

³⁴ Gorbachov, 'Televised Speech on Foreign Policy, Moscow 18 August 1986', in Gorbachov, *Toward a Better World*, (New York: Richardson & Steirman, 1987), pp. 363-372; Shevardnadze's Report to the 19th All-Union Communist Party Congress, 'Foreign Policy and Diplomacy', *Pravda*, 26 July 1988, p. 4

³⁵ Gorbachov, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, pp. 136-138

³⁶ Shevardnadze's speech at the second session of the Supreme Soviet, 'Foreign Policy and Restructuring', *Pravda*, 24 October 1989, pp. 2-4

³⁷ Report by Gorbachov at the joint ceremonial meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, the USSR Supreme Soviet and the Russian Republic Supreme Soviet, devoted to the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, 'October and Restructuring: the Revolution Continues', *Pravda*, 3 November 1987, pp. 2-5

distinct vectors. One was directed at the co-operation with the international community in accordance with the new principles Soviet foreign policy, and the other at the preservation of its relations with Iraq, and, more generally, at improving its standing in the Arab world.³⁸

The main objective of Soviet diplomatic activities during the Gulf crisis was to find a peaceful solution to the conflict for a variety of reasons. First of all, Moscow was anxious to avoid a war in proximity to its borders, and as the crisis continued, appeared increasingly concerned by the potential use of the biological and chemical weapons and the resulting ecological disaster at the USSR's doorstep.³⁹ In addition, the government was concerned about the fate of some nine thousand Soviet nationals in both Kuwait and Iraq.⁴⁰

More importantly, the Kremlin understood that a military confrontation between the U.S. and Iraq would mean a certain defeat for Baghdad, and therefore a loss of a strong ally and a reliable economic partner for the Soviet state.⁴¹ Moscow also recognised that the American military involvement in the Middle East would further weaken the Soviet position in the region, already in decline since the 1970s.⁴² On the domestic level, the resort to force would demonstrate that the

³⁸ Leonid Medvedko, *The Seventh Middle Eastern War: Russia's Geopolitics and Security after the War in the Persian Gulf*, (Moscow: RAN, 1993)

³⁹ Major-General Vadim Makarevsky, 'The Threat from the South', *Novoe Vremya*, №. 34, 21-27 August 1990, p. 12; Yuri Glukhov, 'The War was Tomorrow', *Pravda*, 5 November 1990, p. 3; 'Statement on the Meeting between Prince Feisal and Mikhail Gorbachov', *Vestnik Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del SSSR*, №. 82, December 1990, p. 51; Vitaly Khrustov, 'The Persian Gulf: War and Ecology', *Pravda*, 30 January 1991, p. 4; Gorbachov, 'Statement of the President of the USSR', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 12 February 1991, p. 1

⁴⁰ According to Reuters, there were 880 Soviet nationals in Kuwait and 7,830 in Iraq. 'How Many Foreigners in Iraq and Kuwait', *Izvestia*, 15 August 1990, p. 4; However, two weeks later, the number of Soviet nationals in Iraq was increased to 9,000 according to Reuters, 'The Fate of Hostages', *Pravda*, 27 August 1990, p. 4

⁴¹ This question was raised at the meeting between Shevardnadze and Aziz in Moscow on 25 November 1990, as reported by deputy foreign minister Alexander Belonogov, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Kremlin. The Kuwait Crisis*, (Moscow: Olma Press, 2001) p. 232

⁴² On the state of Soviet policy in the Middle East at the time of the Gulf crisis, Vitaly Naumkin, Deputy Director of the Oriental Institute at the Academy of Science of the USSR, quoted in Sergei Zevorotnykh, Igor Chernyak, 'And Oil Washes Away All Traces', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 14

concept of New Thinking, one of the foundations of the transforming Soviet state, was not working, undermining the credibility of Soviet reforms. For Gorbachov personally, the failure of his foreign policy would mean a decisive victory for his reactionary political enemies, bitterly opposed to his policy of restructuring.⁴³

Consequently, while efforts were undertaken to deepen the co-operation with the U.S., to pursue an active policy at the U.N. and to maintain ties with European leaders, continuous contacts were upheld with Iraq, either directly with Baghdad, or through the Iraqi ambassador in Moscow, and no efforts were spared to activate the Arab factor.

In line with this policy, on 2 August 1990, the Soviet government issued a statement condemning the Iraqi actions, but limited its reaction to 'what could not remain unsaid'⁴⁴:

The Soviet Union believes that no disputes, however complex, justify the use of force. This development greatly contradicts the interests of the Arab states, creates new obstacles on the path of the settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and goes against the positive tendencies of the revitalisation of international life. The Soviet government is convinced that the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Iraqi troops from the Kuwaiti territory would contribute to the liquidation of the dangerous tension in the Middle East. The sovereignty, national independence and territorial integrity of the state of Kuwait should be fully restored and protected.⁴⁵

February 1991, p. 3; Also Karen Dawisha, 'The Correlation of Forces and Soviet Policy in the Middle East', in Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha, *The Soviet Union in the Middle East: Policies and Perspectives*, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), pp. 147-165

⁴³ On conservative forces in Soviet politics and their political vision, Andrei Lipsky, 'New Thinking is Ending. What's Next?'. *Moskovskie Novosti*, 10 February 1991, p. 3

⁴⁴ According to Belonogov, it was important to choose the right tone: 'firm, but not threatening', expressing 'pity and puzzlement concerning the invasion, and the hope that reason will prevail and quick settlement found.' Belonogov, p. 35

⁴⁵ TASS, 'Statement of the Soviet Government', *Pravda and Izvestia*, 2 August 1990, p. 1

At the same time, in accordance with its established practice,⁴⁶ Moscow suspended all military deliveries to Iraq,⁴⁷ and at the U.N. Security Council, convened the same day, voted for the adoption of the Resolution 660, which condemned the Iraqi aggression and demanded its immediate and unconditional withdrawal to positions held on 1 August.⁴⁸

In a further attempt to demonstrate its co-operation with Washington on this matter,⁴⁹ Gorbachov also agreed to a meeting between Shevardnadze and his counterpart James Baker at Vnukovo airport in Moscow in the hope that it would lead to an unprecedented joint declaration on the crisis.⁵⁰ Still, while both sides agreed that aggression should not remain unpunished, the preparation of the declaration revealed the fundamental differences in approaches between the U.S. and the Soviet state, which were to shape their positions for the duration of the crisis.⁵¹ Whereas the former was willing, if necessary, to use force to restore the *status quo ante*, the USSR was determined to avoid it. As the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Belonogov later reported, while the U.S. preferred ‘tough words and expressions, which would make the future [Soviet] dialogue with Baghdad difficult’, Moscow was interested in preserving this ‘channel of communication in the working condition’.⁵²

While undertaking the minimum it could to show its adherence to the New Thinking without damaging its real interests, Moscow made its next steps

⁴⁶ Previously, arms deliveries to Iraq were halted in 1975 during Baghdad’s massive offensive against the Kurds, and in 1980 at the start of its war with Iran.

⁴⁷ TASS, 3 August 1990, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, p. 1

⁴⁸ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/660 (1990)

⁴⁹ For a detailed account of the Soviet-American diplomacy in the first month of the crisis, Margaret Garrard Warner, ‘The Moscow Connection’, *Newsweek*, 17 September 1990, pp. 10-12

⁵⁰ Full text of the Soviet-American Declaration in TASS, ‘Talks in Vnukovo Airport. Joint Call by E. Shevardnadze and J. Baker’, *Pravda*, 4 August 1990, p. 1; ‘Moscow and Washington Join in Condemnation’, *Financial Times*, 4 August 1990, p. 2

⁵¹ Mikhail Ponomarev, ‘A Long Echo of Aggression’, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 31 August 1991, p. 3

⁵² Belonogov, pp. 44-45

dependent on Iraq's further conduct. For this purpose, the Soviet government already on 2 August, forwarded a message to Saddam Hussein, which stated its position and demanded explanations. However, the Iraqi stance at the U.N., playing down the invasion as an Iraqi internal matter⁵³ and Saddam's belated response to the message, which accused the Soviet state of acting 'hastily', hinted the latter's incompetence in Middle Eastern politics and reminded it of its own invasion of Afghanistan,⁵⁴ did not provide Moscow with a reason to deviate from the position taken. Furthermore, the preservation of the friendship with Iraq became more difficult in the face of the unanimous disapproval of the Iraqi aggression.

Yet, the USSR was determined to leave the door to Iraq open, and sent another message to the Iraqi leader on 5 August, which remained undisclosed, responding to Saddam Hussein's claims and warning him about the impending economic sanctions.⁵⁵ Although the USSR did consider such measures an effective instrument in obtaining the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait,⁵⁶ Moscow, in contrast to other Security Council members, notably the U.S. and Britain, favoured a gradual toughening of the sanctions rather than the adoption of a broad embargo regime straight away.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, faced with the fact that its message remained unanswered, not to mention a blatant anti-Soviet article in the main Iraqi

⁵³ Speech of the Iraqi representative to the United Nations Security Council on 2 August 1990, as reported by Belonogov, p. 38

⁵⁴ Excerpts of the message in Belonogov, p. 59

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 61

⁵⁶ It has been argued that Moscow was interested in imposing economic sanctions on Iraq, as it would push up the price for oil on the world market, meaning higher earnings for the Soviet petroleum industry. However, the Soviet economic losses and potential political damage to its relations with Iraq seemed to outweigh the short-term commercial interests, and have therefore not influenced the Soviet vote at the UN. 'Comrade oil', *The Economist*, 11 August 1990, p. 42; 'Shoe on the Other Foot', *The Economist*, 18 August 1990, p. 39

⁵⁷ Belonogov quoted in a press conference in the Soviet Foreign Ministry on 6 August by Maxim Yusin, 'In the Foreign Ministry of USSR: Iraq-Kuwait: No Solution in Sight', *Izvestia*, 7 August 1990, p. 3

newspaper *Al-Iraq* the following day,⁵⁸ it chose to support the tougher option and on 6 August, voted in favour of Resolution 661, which imposed economic sanctions on Iraq.⁵⁹

In fact, the Soviet willingness to look for a compromise within the framework of the U.N. did not only correspond to the main principles of its new foreign policy, but also to the real interests of the Soviet state. By keeping the Kuwaiti within the framework of the U.N., Moscow could, if necessary exercise its right of a veto and use the U.N. as a forum to underline the Soviet position. More importantly, though, the USSR hoped that the active role of the U.N. would ensure that the issue remained on the collective track, preventing Washington, willing to deploy force if a peaceful solution could not be found, from acting unilaterally.

On the rhetorical level, the Soviet government emphasised that the Iraqi aggression could not go on unchallenged in the new era of the Soviet foreign policy. It was pointed out that it was very difficult for the USSR to support the U.N. resolution against Iraq in view of its close relations to Baghdad, but that the New Thinking did not allow it to be guided by what it perceived as 'double standards'.⁶⁰ With an eye on Baghdad, it was repeatedly stressed that Moscow had no choice but to condemn Iraq because 'the use of force to redraw borders, especially in order to annex the sovereign country, threatens a periculous chain reaction endangering the whole world community',⁶¹ and also because the

⁵⁸ As reported by Belonogov, p. 62

⁵⁹ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/661 (1990)

⁶⁰ Editorial, 'Saddam Hussein is Testing the World Community', *International Affairs* (USSR), №. 11, 1990, pp. 51-52

⁶¹ Quoted in Mary Dejevsky, 'Gorbachov Backs U.N. Action', *The Times*, 18 August 1990, p.2

aggression was committed using Soviet arms supplied, according to Moscow, for defensive purposes only.⁶²

Belonogov at a meeting with journalists on 6 August also explained that although Iraq was 'one of the few countries with which we had not only close, but also mutually advantageous relations ...there was no other way'.⁶³ At the same time, an unnamed article in *Pravda* added that the Soviet reaction to the Iraqi aggression did not mean 'that we are not willing to undertake all efforts to find a honourable way out of the crisis, providing all possible assistance to the sides of the Iraq-Kuwaiti crisis.'⁶⁴ Still, to find a peaceful way out of the crisis required a degree of co-operation on the Iraqi side, which Baghdad failed to provide. On the contrary, the repeated incursions of the Iraqi army into the Saudi territory, and Baghdad's announcement of its annexation of Kuwait, increased the sense of threat on the part of the monarchies of the Gulf and triggered Washington's decision to deploy its military forces in Saudi Arabia.⁶⁵

For Moscow, the American presence in the region appeared not only as a great blow to its interests in the Middle East, but also to its diplomatic efforts directed at preventing the U.S. military involvement. Consequently, on 9 August, the Soviet government issued a statement, addressed to both Baghdad and Washington.⁶⁶ It stated that Moscow's hopes for the quick resolution of the conflict had not been realised, reaffirmed that the USSR was interested in

⁶² Gorbachov in his speech in the Odessa military district 'Honourably Get Over the Past in the History of the Country', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 19 August 1990, p. 2; Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennady Gerasimov in a press-conference on 6 August 1990. 'In the Press-Centre of the Foreign Ministry', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 7 September 1990, p. 3; Kozyrev, 'Legal Basis for Arms Trade', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 3 October 1990, p. 3

⁶³ Quoted by Yusin, 'No Solution in Sight', *Izvestia*, p. 4; Similar view also expressed in an interview with *Novoe Vremya*, №. 32, 'Common Sense Must Prevail', 14-20 August 1990, pp. 4-5

⁶⁴ 'Anachronism: an Opinion' *Pravda*, 7 August 1990, p. 4

⁶⁵ Michael R. Gordon, 'Bush's Aims: Deter an Attack, Send a Signal', *New York Times*, 8 August 1990, p. 1

⁶⁶ TASS, 'Statement of the Foreign Ministry of the USSR', *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, 9 August 1990, p. 1

preserving its friendship with Iraq, but declared that in the given situation 'we cannot adopt a position of silence'. The declaration reiterated that the Soviet position 'to this question of principle' remained 'firm – the sovereignty, national independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait should be fully restored and protected'. At the same time, addressing the U.S., the statement stressed the importance of showing restraint and not to allow action that could further fuel the situation.⁶⁷ It restated its opposition to the use of force and unilateral decisions: 'The experience of many years proves that the best and most reasonable course of action in the conflict situations is the collective efforts, the full use of the mechanisms of the U.N'.⁶⁸

At the same time, a commentator in *Pravda* concluded that in view of the scope of the U.S. deployment, it was not only about measures for the territorial protection of Saudi Arabia. In his view, it was about strategic actions that corresponded to the interests of the U.S. and some of its allies, and were directed at 'cardinally changing the balance of power' in the Middle East.⁶⁹ According to Soviet military, it was also about an encirclement of the Soviet southern borders.⁷⁰ Alexander Belonogov at the meeting of the Political Committee of the Parliament summarised the Soviet concerns: 'The growth of the American military might cannot please us either in the short-term, because the situation is becoming more and more explosive, nor in the long-term because there is no guarantee that the U.S. will leave Saudi Arabia once the crisis is over'.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ TASS, Statement of the Soviet Government on 9 August 1990, *Pravda*, 9 August 1990, p. 1

⁶⁹ Valery Linnik, 'What Does the Desert Shield Promise?', *Pravda*, 13 August 1990, p. 4

⁷⁰ Dejevsky, 'Gorbachov Confident Political Formula Will be Found', *The Times*, 1 September 1990, p. 2, quoting the Chief of Staff of the Warsaw Pact, General Vladimir Lobov

⁷¹ Quoted by Dejevsky, 'Kremlin Plea for Arab Unity', *The Times*, 31 August 1990, p. 2; Similar concerns were raised by Primakov in an interview with *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 'The Chance Still Exists', 15 January 1991, p. 3

In fact, Saudi Arabia also requested Soviet participation in the multinational coalition forces based on its territory, even on the symbolic scale, in the hope of sending a strong signal to Saddam Hussein.⁷² However, Moscow appeared reluctant. Officially, its refusal was explained by the lack of the practical necessity for the Soviet deployment in view of the great number of multinational forces already in place, by the internal difficulties in the Soviet Union, and finally, by the impossibility to obtain support from the Soviet publics, haunted by the Afghan syndrome.⁷³ In reality, Moscow believed that the dispatch of Soviet troops to the Gulf would have contradicted the proclaimed Soviet objective of avoiding the use of force, impeding the search of a peaceful solution. More importantly, the USSR was cautious not to provoke Baghdad, not least because over 8,000 Soviet specialists were still held in Iraq. Their fate became an important issue for the Soviet government in the face of the public concern for their well-being and the Western allegations concerning the nature of their occupation in Iraq.⁷⁴

On a domestic level, the Kremlin's position on the crisis was far from generally accepted. Many felt that by siding with Washington Moscow was betraying its long-standing ally Iraq and giving up its economic interests in that country and the region as a whole. A commentator in *Izvestia* acknowledged that the Soviet position was influenced by the need to co-operate with the U.S. that was 'one of the main levers to get us out of the crisis', but concluded that the

⁷² Nicholas Beeston, 'Kingdom Wants Soviet Presence', *The Times*, 11 September 1990, p. 11

⁷³ Galina Sidorova, 'The World Closes in', *Novoe Vremya*, №. 36, 4-10 September 1990, pp. 5-6

⁷⁴ Dmitry Kulik, 'Kuwait: How are Our People?', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 5 August 1990, p. 4; Alexander Levchenko, 'Between the Wheels of Big Politics', *Izvestia*, 4 October 1990, p. 3; Alexei Ostalsky, 'The Fate of Soviet Citizens in Iraq: Contradictory News', *Izvestia*, 8 October 1990, p. 4; On the nature of their occupation: Interview with Deputy Head of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General V. Nikityukh, 'What does Our Military Do in Iraq', *Izvestia*, 15 August 1990, p. 3; Charodeyev, 'Will the Soviet Military Specialists Remain in Iraq?', Press conference in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, *Izvestia*, 23 August 1990, p. 3

Soviet and American policies were not 'compatible.'⁷⁵ While Moscow showed its adherence to the new course and went against its 'friend', Washington wanted 'to dominate the oil-rich region' and 'still relies on force and the promises that forces will be used in the interests of peace and stability.'⁷⁶

Another article in *Sovetskaya Rossia* argued that although it was right to give up the confrontation with the U.S. and to end the Cold War, the USSR should have sought a different position with regard to the crisis in view of its economic interests in Iraq.⁷⁷ It deplored the fact that it was foremost the Soviet Union that 'lost out' in the crisis, while America profited from its presence in the region.⁷⁸ The author predicted that when the Soviet economy recovered and the political life was re-ordered, Moscow would want to return to its role in the Middle East. 'But in a few years our place will be occupied, and no one will wait for us there.'⁷⁹ In contrast, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* raised the question of whether the change in Soviet foreign policy was justified, and concluded that although economic co-operation with Iraq was advantageous, the Soviet hesitation in condemning Iraq would have cost Moscow the trust 'we have earned with such a difficulty over the past years.'⁸⁰

These discussions in the press were echoed by heated debates within the government. While for some, notably Gorbachov and his foreign minister Shevardnadze, the Soviet position appeared a question of principle, for others it

⁷⁵ Stanislav Kondrashev, 'Together Against the Aggressor. What's Next?', *Izvestia*, 14 August 1990, p. 4; Later similar view by E. Gudkov, 'The Right Guarantees?', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 February 1991, p. 3

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Eduard Volodin, 'An Arab Knot', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 23 October 1990, p. 4; Later similar view by Alexei Vasiliev, 'Without Nostalgia', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 27 January 1991, p. 13

⁷⁸ Later, similar view expressed by Roman Mustafin, 'Is it Possible to Blow Out the Fire in the Persian Gulf', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 15 February 1991, p. 3

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Sergei Zavorotnykh, Igor Chernyak, 'A Business Trip to Baghdad', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 16 October 1990, p.4

was, a question of necessity.⁸¹ Although all factions across the Soviet political landscape considered the condemnation of the Iraqi actions justified, the reactionary bloc 'Soyuz' (Unity), led by Colonel Viktor Alksnis, from the onset vehemently opposed Gorbachov's policy in the Gulf, advocating support for Baghdad and playing up the question of the Soviet hostages in Iraq.⁸² In the view of its adherents, Iraq was part of Soviet spheres of influence that had been ceded unilaterally to the West along with Eastern Europe and parts of the Third World.⁸³ While the left-wing democrats and the so-called centrists, supported co-operation with the U.S., the conservatives and much of the senior military appeared suspicious of American objectives, and advocated an independent Soviet policy in the Middle East.⁸⁴

There was, however, a general consensus that war in the Gulf should be avoided, but for different reasons. Whereas the democrats believed that military actions would undermine the very concept of the New Thinking, the conservatives rejected the war due to their support of Iraq, and the military, because of the strategic concerns related to the proximity of the conflict zone to Soviet borders.⁸⁵

In fact, the struggle for power on two levels, between the democrats and the conservatives within the government and between the centre and the republics, which had intensified throughout the 1990, had already visibly weakened

⁸¹ Anatoly Chernyaev, *Six Years with Gorbachov*, p. 283; Mikhail Gorbachev, *Mémoires*, (Paris: Éditions du Rocher, 1997), p. 689; Shevardnadze, *My Choice*, p. 103 ; Also later, Gorbachov quoted by Agence France Press, 'L'Arabie Saoudite Octroie un Prêt de 4 Milliards de Dollars al'URSS', *Le Monde*, 29 November 1990, p. 3

⁸² Sidorova, 'Last Invitation to Peace', *Novoe Vremya*, №. 50, 11-17 December 1990, pp. 14-15

⁸³ Serge Schmemmann, 'Caution in Moscow', *New York Times*, 9 February 1991, p. 1

⁸⁴ For example, Dmitri Vasiliev, leader of the conservative society Pamyt (Remembrance), 'Something About the History of Soviet-Iraqi Relations', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 26 January 1991, p. 4

⁸⁵ Raised by the Chief of Staff of the Warsaw Pact, General Vladimir Lobov at the Meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, as reported by Anatoly Yanayev, Deputy Chairman of the Committee in an interview with *Novoe Vremya*, 'We Shall not Fight There', №. 38, 18-24 September 1990, p. 5; Dejevsky, 'Gorbachov Confident Political Formula Will be Found', *The Times*, p. 2

Gorbachov's power and strengthened his main rival, Boris Yeltsin.⁸⁶ It was therefore crucial to the Soviet leader to show some success at home, where his reputation was waning and to prove that at least one wing of *perestroika* – that of foreign policy - was functioning.

As a consequence, Moscow, to complement its West-oriented policy, also concentrated its efforts on activating the Arab factor in the hope of stimulating the search for a peaceful settlement by the Arabs themselves and mobilising the Arab world towards applying collective political pressure of Baghdad. In practice, the Arab solution meant an inter-Arab compromise, aimed at avoiding the war, removing foreign troops from the region and allowing Saddam Hussein to save face.⁸⁷ However, the Kremlin soon realised that the deep division within the Arab world over Iraq's intransigent claims, first revealed at the Arab League meeting in Cairo on 9 August, had greatly diminished its capability to influence the events.⁸⁸ Still, Soviet interests in the Middle East dictated the maintenance of close relations with the Arab states, in particular to counterbalance the growing American influence in the region.

Saddam Hussein, too, appeared aware of the deep division in the Arab world, and attempted to use it to obtain support for his cause.⁸⁹ Thus, on 12 August, Baghdad announced its peace initiative for the resolution of the crisis,

⁸⁶ Richard Pipes, 'The Soviet Union Adrift', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, №. 1, Winter 1990/91, p. 73; Lilia Shevtsova, 'The Chances of Democracy', *Novoe Vremya*, №. 52, 25-31 December 1990, pp. 4-6

⁸⁷ 'War, Peace and Mr Gorbachov's Arab Solution', *The Economist*, 3 November 1990, p. 79

⁸⁸ Konstantin Geyvando, 'The Night of the Arab Tragedy', *Izvestia*, 16 August 1990, p. 3; On the division of the Arab world, Dmitry Veliky, 'Everything Mixed Up in the Arab House', *Izvestia*, 27 September 1990, p. 3

⁸⁹ For a detailed analysis of the reaction of the Arab world to the Iraqi aggression and their underlying reasons, Fouad Ajami, 'The Summer of Arab Discontent', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 69, №. 1, Winter 1991, pp. 1-20

based on the gradual settlements of Middle Eastern conflicts in accordance with their occurrence.⁹⁰

The plan proposed the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories, followed by the withdrawal of the Syrian forces from Lebanon, and finally, by the retreat of the Iranian and Iraqi armies from their respective territories. Only then, would Iraq agree to deal with the Kuwaiti question 'with the due consideration to the historical rights of Iraq to its territory and to the choice of the people of Kuwait.' It was followed by demands for the immediate withdrawal of the American and all other troops from Saudi Arabia and the instant halt to all measures adopted against Iraq. Although rejected by the anti-Iraqi coalition, the concept of linkage put forward by Saddam, which tied the Kuwaiti crisis linkage of the Kuwait crisis to the Arab-Israeli conflict was enthusiastically welcomed by Jordan, the PLO and the Arab 'street', but not by the Arab governmental circles, which did not want Saddam to make gains regarding the Palestinian cause.⁹¹

Even though Moscow realised that the Iraqi peace initiative in its present form was unacceptable to the international community, the Kremlin thought the linkage of the Kuwaiti question to the Arab-Israeli conflict a useful basis for the search of an acceptable compromise.⁹² Not to forget that Baghdad's plan largely

⁹⁰ *The Kuwait Crisis: Basic Documents*, (Cambridge: Research Centre for International Law, 1991), Vol. 11, pp. 281-82

⁹¹ Yuri Subbotin, 'The Arab Western', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 22 August 1990, p. 4; On Jordan's position see, Yuri Danilychev, 'Aggressor or a New Saladin', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 19 September 1990, p. 4

⁹² Gorbachev, *Mémoires*, p. 693, also 'Transcript of Bush-Gorbachov News Conference at Summit', *New York Times*, 10 September 1990, p. 8; This view was also echoed by Vladimir Belyakov, 'Legitimacy is Indivisible', *Pravda* 17 August 1990, p. 4; 'Excerpt from Shevardnadze's Speech', *New York Times*, 5 September 1990, p. 17; Dejevsky, 'Kremlin Seeking an Overall Peace Accord in the Region', *The Times*, 5 September 1990, p. 5

corresponded to the Soviet own initiatives on the Middle East, such as the call for an international conference for the resolution of the regional conflicts.⁹³

The 'linkage' question, however, created a further crack in the Soviet-American common stance on the crisis. While for Moscow, a peaceful resolution could be based on a compromise that would allow Saddam Hussein to save face and appear as a champion of the Palestinian cause, Washington rejected any solution that would reward the aggressor, or broaden the scope of the crisis into wider regional issues.

For Gorbachov, who was ambitious to find a peaceful settlement of the crisis at any cost, while maintaining Soviet co-operation with the U.S., this created an insurmountable dilemma. Shevardnadze and Gorbachov's personal advisor, Yevgeny Primakov, also found themselves split on the issue. The former considered Iraq's fulfilment of the U.N. Resolution 660 as the only acceptable solution to the crisis and viewed it as the main task of the Soviet policy to preserve the unity of the coalition and demonstrate Iraq the absence of an alternative to withdrawal.

Primakov, however, believed that in view of Saddam Hussein's 'unique personality', the only way to resolve the crisis was to allow the Iraqi leader to save face, even at the expense of Kuwait. While Shevardnadze later rejected Iraq's attempts to link the crisis to other regional issues as 'not serious', calling it an 'adventurist plan aimed at turning the conflict into the Arab-Israeli one',⁹⁴ Primakov maintained that Saddam was 'generally right when speaking about the

⁹³ Present in the Soviet official statements since the Geneva Conference in December 1973, and more importantly since Camp David.

⁹⁴ Interview in 'The Crisis in the Gulf: Knots and Solutions', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 10 March 1991, p. 13

double standards in the Palestinian and Kuwaiti questions', wondering 'why not try using the situation for the resolution of the Palestinian problem?',⁹⁵

This difference in approaches towards the crisis by Gorbachov's closest advisors led to speculations in the Soviet and the Western press about the existence of two policies, one identified with the Foreign Minister and one with Primakov.⁹⁶ It also contributed to the increasing suspicion on the part of the West concerning Soviet objectives in the crisis, with Moscow being accused of playing a 'double game' of co-operating with Washington, while working on the preservation of its close ties with Baghdad, or attempting to create a split in the anti-Iraqi coalition.⁹⁷ In reality, it was Gorbachov himself, who was torn between a more flexible approach toward Iraq advocated by Primakov, and the tough line called for by Shevardnadze, necessitated by the nascent partnership with the U.S., as well as by the deterioration of the situation in Kuwait.

Despite its rhetorical overtures, Baghdad throughout August continued to consolidate its military-strategic position in Kuwait and even agreed to a humiliating peace settlement with Iran, which while rending the eight years of war entirely meaningless, provided Iraq with additional troops, previously needed on the Iranian border.⁹⁸ Fearing an imminent American, or perhaps Israeli retaliation, Baghdad also attempted to exercise pressure on the West, by detaining Western nationals and moving them to Iraqi military installations, to act as a 'human

⁹⁵ Interview in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 15 January 1991

⁹⁶ Andrei Kortunov, 'Crisis in the Gulf and the Soviet Approach', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 13 January 1991, p. 3; Alexei Vasiliev, 'Who Determined and How the Soviet Position in the Conflict between Iraq and Kuwait', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 16 February 1991, p. 5; Christian Schmidt-Haeuer, 'Gewagtes Spiel', *Die Zeit*, 22 February 1991, p. 8

⁹⁷ Tom Post, Fred Coleman, Rod Nordland, Margaret Garrard, 'Moscow's Gulf Game', *Newsweek*, 25 February 1991, p. 15

⁹⁸ Efrem Mikitenko, 'Baghdad is Turning to Tehran', *Pravda*, 16 August 1990, p. 4; Belyakov, 'A Sharp Turn', *Pravda*, 18 August 1990, p. 4

shield' in case of an attack.⁹⁹ Apart from further increasing Baghdad's international isolation, these Iraqi actions provided a great impetus for a new U.N. resolution, sanctioning the use of force to uphold the naval embargo against Iraq.¹⁰⁰

In Soviet eyes, this resolution appeared particularly important as it raised the question of command and control arrangements for multinational forces.¹⁰¹ While the Anglo-American partners favoured a tough approach to Saddam Hussein and the control of the military action by the states which had contributed forces, the USSR, in accepting the possibility of the use of force, advocated direct control by the U.N.¹⁰² In an attempt to tie the political-military reality to the U.N., and more importantly, to create a precedent for the future, Moscow tried to activate the moribund Military Staff Committee (MSC), which according to the Article 47 of the U.N. Charter was to 'advise and assist the Security Council on questions relating to the Council's military requirements.'¹⁰³ The Provision on the use of this Committee was indeed included into paragraph 4 of the resolution, and resulted in a meeting of the body at a senior level to review the situation in the Gulf. Otherwise, the MSC remained inactive and did not receive much prominence outside the Soviet press.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Vladimir Shurygin, 'Persian Gulf – a Powder Keg', *Pravda*, 19 August 1990, p. 4

¹⁰⁰ U.N. Resolution 665, S/RES 665, (25 August 1990), adopted with Russian support

¹⁰¹ Paul Taylor, A.J.R. Groom, *The United Nations and the Gulf War 1990-91: Back to the Future?* Discussion Paper No. 38, (London: The Royal Institute for International Affairs, 1992)

¹⁰² Michael Littlejohns, 'Security Council Plays Down Sanctions Differences', *Financial Times*, 15 August 1990, p. 3; Bone, 'UN Divided on the Role of Supervising Naval Action', *The Times*, 23 August 1990, p. 2

¹⁰³ United Nations Charter, available online at: www.un.org/aboutun/charter/, viewed on 13 January 2004

¹⁰⁴ Vladimir Chernyshov, 'On the Collective Actions under the Aegis of the UN', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 17 August 1990, p. 4; Alexander Golz, 'Lessons for Tomorrow', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 October 1990, p. 3

In an attempt to influence the USSR's position at the U.N., on 20 August Saddam Hussein sent Deputy Prime Minister Sadoun Hammadi to Moscow.¹⁰⁵ During the talks with Shevardnadze, Hammadi expressed Iraq's willingness to repay its debts to the USSR within one and a half years through the deliveries of the Iraqi oil, and offered Moscow closer economic co-operation, in return for the Soviet veto of the U.N. resolution authorising the enforcement of sanctions against Iraq.¹⁰⁶ Shevardnadze informed the Iraqi representative that Moscow did not favour the adoption of that resolution, but that Iraqi actions did not give it a choice. Moscow could delay its adoption for a few days, but only if Iraq would use the time to re-assess its position.¹⁰⁷ This offer gained no response. In a final effort, Gorbachov on the eve of the vote at the U.N. Security Council sent an urgent message to Saddam Hussein, trying to convince the Iraqi leader to accept the Resolution 660 and avoid confrontation.¹⁰⁸ However, the Iraqi response, which remained unpublished, prompted Moscow to support adoption of the U.N. Resolution 665 on 25 August.¹⁰⁹

In view of intensive American contacts with Moscow on the Iraqi issue, President Bush in August proposed a Soviet-American Summit in Helsinki to be held on 9 September. On the eve of the summit, the Soviet government invited the Iraqi foreign minister to Moscow to get an up-to-date impression of Baghdad's intentions in the hope of reaching a compromise with Washington over the crisis.¹¹⁰ During his talks with Gorbachov on 5 September, Tareq Aziz¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Yusin, 'Did Soviet Approach Change?' *Izvestia*, 22 August 1990, p. 3

¹⁰⁶ Belonogov, pp. 95-96

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 98

¹⁰⁸ TASS, 'Message of the President of the USSR', *Pravda and Izvestia*, 24 August 1990, p. 1

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/665 (1990)

¹¹⁰ Gorbachov, *Op. cit.*, p. 690

¹¹¹ TASS, 'Reception by M.S. Gorbachov of the Representative of the Iraqi Government', *Pravda*, 6 September 1990, p. 1

reiterated Iraqi claims to Kuwait and expressed Baghdad's determination to confront the U.S.¹¹² He negatively assessed the Soviet reaction to the developments in the Gulf, arguing that although Baghdad 'did not expect Moscow to protect Iraq,' it would have liked the latter 'not to limit the problems to the Kuwaiti question alone' and to oppose the 'American extremism in the military sphere'.¹¹³ In his view, the USSR should have supported Saddam Hussein's peace initiative of 12 August, which would have strengthened the Iraqi position.¹¹⁴

In subsequent talks with the Soviet deputy foreign minister Belonogov, Aziz requested Soviet support at the Security Council, and Moscow's rejection of new resolutions against Iraq.¹¹⁵ However, Belonogov made it clear that the USSR would not go against the international community and stressed that Moscow wanted to see 'any signs' in the Iraqi behaviour that would give it a 'space for manoeuvring'.¹¹⁶

Considering the failure of the talks with Aziz,¹¹⁷ Moscow during the subsequent Helsinki Summit decided to base its proposals of a peaceful settlement of the crisis on the idea of an international conference on the Middle Eastern issues and on Baghdad's peace plan of withdrawal, albeit in reverse order, placing Kuwait on the top of the agenda.¹¹⁸ Although Bush rejected the Soviet proposals, the meeting in Helsinki appeared particularly important, as it sent a strong signal to Baghdad and demonstrated unity between the USSR and the U.S. More

¹¹² Gorbachov, p. 692

¹¹³ Belonogov, p. 127

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 133

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 133-134

¹¹⁷ Aziz at the press conference in Moscow expressed his satisfaction with the talks, but acknowledged 'certain differences' in the evaluation of the situation in the Gulf. Yuri Stroyev, 'We Have Differences', *Pravda*, 6 September 1990, p. 2

¹¹⁸ Details of the Soviet proposals, *Pravda*, 10 September 1990, p. 1; Primakov, 'Helsinki – Middle East, Member of the Presidential Council Gives an Account', *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 12 September 1990, p. 3

importantly, Washington, for the first time officially acknowledged the Soviet interests in the region and invited Moscow to participate in the regional affairs as a legitimate partner of the U.S.¹¹⁹ However, the talks also revealed real differences between Bush and Gorbachov on a number of issues, such as the possible use of force, Soviet participation in upholding the embargo against Iraq, the linkage with other Middle Eastern conflicts, and the Arab role as possible brokers of a compromise.¹²⁰

Under the Soviet presidency in the U.N. Security Council in September, a further four resolutions were adopted on the Kuwaiti question.¹²¹ Shevardnadze in his speech at the 45th session of the U.N. General Assembly on 25 September, called the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait a 'terrorist act against the emerging new world order', and once again appealed to Baghdad to 'hear reason, to obey the demands of law and of plain common sense.'¹²² He stressed that the U.N. had the power to 'suppress the acts of aggression', and that 'it will be exercised if the illegal occupation of Kuwait continues.'¹²³ While Shevardnadze emphasised that diplomacy had to be given every chance to work, he also warned that 'war may break out any day, any moment.'¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ George Bush, Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p. 361; Bill Keller, 'Junior Partner No More, Gorbachov Raises Role to Major Player in Crisis', *New York Times*, 11 September 1990, p. 18

¹²⁰ Transcript of the joint news conference, *New York Times*, 10 September 1990, p. 8; *Pravda*, 11 September 1990, p. 2

¹²¹ Resolution 666, S/RES/666 (13 September 1990) extending the powers of the Committee on Sanctions on the question of delivery of humanitarian aid to Iraq; Resolution 667, S/RES/667 (16 September 1990) responding to the Iraqi intrusion of the French and Canadian embassies in Kuwait; Resolution 669, S/RES/669 (24 September 1990) requesting the Committee on Sanctions to study the request for assistance on the part of the countries suffering from the economic embargo on Iraq; Resolution 670, S/RES/670 (25 September 1990) imposing an air blockade on Iraq.

¹²² 'Excerpts from Shevardnadze's U.N. Address Calling for Iraq to Quit Kuwait', *New York Times*, 26 September 1990, p. 10

¹²³ Yevgeny Ovcharenko, 'UN is United Like Never Before', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 26 September 1990, p. 3

¹²⁴ *New York Times*, 26 September 1990, p. 10

For many, Shevardnadze's remarks suggested that Moscow was not opposed to the use of force against Iraq under the terms preferred by the U.S. and Britain.¹²⁵ In the West, this was regarded as a key shift in the USSR's position towards the crisis.¹²⁶ On the domestic level, it prompted a sharp response from the conservatives, who accused Shevardnadze of sending the Soviet forces to the Persian Gulf.¹²⁷

While pursuing an active policy at the U.N., Gorbachov, in response to the growing conservative pressures within the government, decided to intensify Soviet contacts with Iraq and send Primakov, a renowned Arabist and an old acquaintance of Saddam Hussein as his personal envoy to Baghdad in early October.¹²⁸ Primakov's mission consisted primarily in finding any indications of a shift in the Iraqi position, which would allow the search for a peaceful settlement of the crisis.¹²⁹ However, Saddam Hussein showed himself not willing to search for a solution of crisis and chose to hand over the initiative to the Soviet side by requesting Moscow to forward him written proposals on a possible 'package solution' of the conflict.¹³⁰

Even though the subsequently prepared 'invisible package', also known as the 'Primakov package', proposing an international conference on the Middle East and ceding to Iraq the Kuwaiti islands and Rumaila oil fields,¹³¹ was clearly unacceptable to the U.S. and the coalition, Gorbachov in mid-October instructed

¹²⁵ Charles Bremner, 'Security Council Votes 14-1 for an Air Blockade', *The Times*, 26 September 1990, p. 1

¹²⁶ Thomas L. Friedman, 'Soviets' Warning to Iraqis on War Praised by West', *New York Times*, 27 September 1990, p. 1

¹²⁷ 'Declaration of the MP Group', *Veteran*, 15-21 October 1990, p. 2; Mustafin, 'To Save Face or to Lose Head', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 23 October 1990, p. 3

¹²⁸ Clines, 'Gorbachov Sends a Chief Advisor to Iraq in New Diplomatic Effort', *New York Times*, 4 October, p. 14

¹²⁹ TASS, 'Meeting with Journalists' at the press-centre of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, 4 October 1990, *Pravda*, p. 1

¹³⁰ Primakov, 'War that Could Have Been Avoided', *Pravda*, 27 February 1991, p. 3

¹³¹ Belonogov, p. 171

Primakov to present his proposal to governments in Rome, Paris, London and Washington.¹³² On his return, Primakov was once again sent to Baghdad via Cairo, Damascus and Riyadh in order to clarify to Saddam Hussein the consequences of his refusal to accept the demands of the international community and raise the question of the Soviet nationals held in Iraq.¹³³ However, despite his optimism, echoed by Gorbachov's spokesman Vitaly Ignatenko,¹³⁴ this second mission too, remained without success.¹³⁵ In the West, Primakov's 'shuttle diplomacy' was met with suspicion as 'muddying the waters surrounding the multinational effort',¹³⁶ and as a Soviet attempt to play an independent role in the Middle East.¹³⁷

Throughout the autumn of 1990, the stalemate in the settlement of the crisis, the increasing tensions in the international coalition, as well as the realisation that the sanctions had so far not achieved the desired effect, as confirmed by Saddam Hussein himself in an interview with CNN on 29 October,¹³⁸ led to a unilateral decision by the U.S. to double its forces in Saudi Arabia and adopt an offensive posture. However, this controversial move intensified the domestic pressures on the White House to obtain U.N. legitimacy

¹³² Vadim Matyash, Alexander Fedyashin, 'Mission of Special Representative of the President of the USSR', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 October 1990, p. 3

¹³³ 'Trip of the Special Representative of the President of the USSR', *Izvestia*, 16 October 1990, p. 1; 'Talks in Baghdad', *Pravda*, 29 October 1990, p. 2

¹³⁴ Quoted by Christopher Walker, 'Gorbachov Envoy in Cairo as New Gulf Peace Mission Starts', *The Times*, 17 October 1990, p. 12

¹³⁵ Gorbachev, *Mémoires*, p. 694; On Primakov's two missions, see his interview in 'Middle East: Chances for Peace Exist', *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 7 November 1990, p. 3

¹³⁶ Lionel Barber, Allison Smith, 'Primakov Renews Diplomatic Offensive', *Financial Times*, 25 October 1990, p. 4; James Sherr, 'Why We Cannot Count on Gorbachov in the Gulf', *The Times*, 30 October 1990, p. 12

¹³⁷ Robert Graham, 'Moscow Takes Diplomatic Centre-Stage', *Financial Times*, 31 October 1990, p. 4; 'A Wobble in the Gulf', *The Economist*, 3 November 1990, pp. 16-17; Russell Watson, Garrard Warner, Coleman, 'Moscow's Two-edged Plowshare', *Newsweek*, 19 November 1990, p. 13

¹³⁸ Eric Schmitt, 'Hussein in U.S. TV Interview, Rejects a Kuwait Withdrawal', *New York Times*, 30 October 1990, p. 13

for the potential use of force.¹³⁹ Holding the presidency at the Security Council for November, which was subsequently to be handed to Yemen and Cuba, sympathetic to the Iraqi cause, Washington was therefore interested in a rapid adoption of a new resolution on Iraq sanctioning the use of force.

The situation was quite different for Moscow. In view of the increasing opposition to his policies at home, Gorbachov who at the time 'could see the power slipping from his hands',¹⁴⁰ was anxious to prevent, or at least delay, the adoption of such a resolution, advocating a further toughening of sanctions, and considering the use of force as the last resort. Instead, he proposed a two-stage approach, whereby the Security Council first posed an ultimatum to Baghdad demanding the fulfilment of its resolutions, and then, in case of Iraq's defiance, once again reviewed the situation with the aim of adopting tougher measures, including military option.¹⁴¹

However, when his suggestion was rejected by Washington, Gorbachov did not insist. Anxious to prevent a potential American unilateral action in accordance with the Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, Gorbachov agreed to the adoption of a new resolution, while attempting to minimise the damage for his domestic position and leave the door open for the Soviet diplomatic efforts. He therefore proposed to call the period between the adoption of the resolution and the deadline for the use of force, fixed for 15 January, a 'pause of goodwill', aimed at inviting Baghdad to change its stance. In addition, Gorbachov requested the U.S. to replace the word 'force' in the draft text by 'all necessary means'.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Roland Dannreuther, 'The Gulf Conflict: a Political and Strategic Analysis', *Adelphi Paper* No 264, Winter 1991/92, p. 40

¹⁴⁰ Chernayev, *Six Years With Gorbachov*, p. 291

¹⁴¹ Belonogov, p. 201

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 203

Taking into account the sensitivity of the issue, in mid-November, the Soviet deputy foreign ministers Belonogov and Petrovsky toured the Middle East and the Gulf to find out the Arab attitudes towards a new resolution, and to present the Soviet position.¹⁴³ As usual, Moscow also decided to check the Iraqi position before its vote in the Security Council, and invited Tareq Aziz to Moscow on 25 November.¹⁴⁴ As before, Iraq remained defiant, visibly irritating the Soviet government,¹⁴⁵ that decided voted for the adoption of the resolution 678 on 29 November.¹⁴⁶ In his speech in the Security Council, Shevardnadze stressed that for the Soviet Union the resolution did not mean a 'step towards war', but rather the 'last chance to avoid it', and expressed hope that the 'pause of goodwill' would allow Baghdad to take the right decision – to withdraw from Kuwait.¹⁴⁷

In an interview the same day, the Soviet foreign minister emphasised that Moscow was not ready to send its military forces to the Gulf, but warned Baghdad of 'serious consequences' if a single Soviet citizen in Iraq was harmed.¹⁴⁸ Shevardnadze's statement prompted a new wave of opposition at home to any potential Soviet military participation in the crisis.¹⁴⁹ Although the possibility of sending troops to the Gulf was repeatedly denied by Gorbachov, the Foreign

¹⁴³ BBC World Service, *The Gulf Chronology*, see October

¹⁴⁴ TASS 'Reception by the President of the USSR of T. Aziz', for *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, 26 November 1990, p. 1

¹⁴⁵ TASS, 'Reception by the President of the USSR of T. Aziz', *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, 26 November 1990, p. 1

¹⁴⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/678 (1990)

¹⁴⁷ 'Speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, E.A. Shevardnadze at the U.N. Security Council', *Izvestia*, 30 November 1990, p. 3

¹⁴⁸ Alexander Shalnev, 'Security Council Gives Baghdad 45 Days. A Pause Before Peace or War?', *Izvestia*, 30 November 1990, p. 4

¹⁴⁹ Charodeyev, 'Is the Use of Soviet Forces Abroad Possible?', *Izvestia*, 5 December 1990, p. 4; 'Protest Demonstration on Smolensky Square', *Izvestia*, 6 December 1990, p. 4

Ministry and Shevardnadze himself,¹⁵⁰ the accusations continued to persist, contributing to the latter's decision to resign on 20 December 1990.¹⁵¹

If initially the USSR perceived itself as most suitable mediator in the crisis given its strong ties to Iraq, when faced with the tight timeline, the Kremlin was willing to hand over the diplomatic initiative to the U.S. Moscow therefore welcomed the offer by President Bush, announced on 30 November, to receive the Iraqi foreign minister in Washington and to send James Baker to Baghdad.¹⁵² As Saddam Hussein at first rejected the proposal, the Soviet diplomatic efforts concentrated in facilitating the American-Iraqi dialogue through its ambassador in Baghdad, as well as through the Soviet delegations to Iraq. Moscow also appealed to Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestinians, who supported Saddam and maintained close ties to Baghdad.¹⁵³ When the subsequently arranged Baker-Aziz talks in Geneva on 9 January, broke down as expected,¹⁵⁴ Gorbachov was willing to once again take the initiative and send Primakov to Baghdad with the 'invisible package', but Washington declined.¹⁵⁵

It appears that until the very last moment Gorbachov strongly believed that in view of the impending military action by the coalition forces, Saddam Hussein would change his mind and begin the withdrawal from Kuwait. Only this can explain his request of a 'personal favour' to Bush to delay the war for at least 24

¹⁵⁰ TASS, 'Briefing in the Press-Centre of the Foreign Ministry', *Pravda*, 4 December 1990, p. 1; TASS, 'On the Crisis in the Persian Gulf', *Pravda*, 12 December 1990, p. 1; Dejevsky, 'Initiative Gets Welcome from Kremlin', *The Times*, 7 December 1990, p. 12

¹⁵¹ Shevardnadze's resignation speech in Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, pp. 201-204

¹⁵² TASS, 'Statement of the Foreign Ministry of the USSR in Connection with the Crisis in the Persian Gulf', *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, 3 December 1990, p. 1

¹⁵³ TASS, 'Statement of the Foreign Ministry of the USSR', *Pravda*, 11 January 1991, p. 1; Quentin Peel, 'Moscow Asks Arafat to Plead with Saddam', *Financial Times*, 11 January 1991, p. 2

¹⁵⁴ TASS, 'Statement of the Foreign Ministry of the USSR', *Pravda*, 11 January 1991, p. 1

¹⁵⁵ Andrew Rosenthal, 'Gorbachov Seeking a Way out in Gulf', *New York Times*, 12 January 1991, p. 8

hours, when Baker informed his counterpart in Moscow about the start of the operation *Desert Storm*¹⁵⁶ in the night of 16 January 1991.¹⁵⁷ The next day, Gorbachov in a televised statement informed the Soviet public about the start of the operations ‘provoked by the refusal of the Iraqi leadership to withdraw from Kuwait’, and the last minute diplomatic efforts undertaken by the Soviet government.¹⁵⁸

Considering the war an ‘evil that Baghdad brought on itself’ and a ‘lesson for Saddam Hussein’, Moscow was more than ever determined to obtain the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait by peaceful means. For this purpose, the USSR directed its policy towards intensifying its contacts with the Arab world, maintaining close co-operation with the U.S., and increasing political pressure on Baghdad. On the Arab front, Moscow focused on Yemen and the PLO who were urged to use their influence in Baghdad to pressurise Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait.¹⁵⁹ Russia also maintained intense contact with Iran and Turkey, which did not participate militarily, with the aim of localising military action.¹⁶⁰ More importantly, particular attention was paid to Israel whose participation in the war in retaliation to Iraq’s *Scud* missile strikes was considered as highly undesirable by the West as it could split the alliance, and was viewed by the USSR as a blow to the Arab-Israeli settlement that Moscow was planning to reanimate after the end of the Gulf crisis.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Also known as *Desert Shield* (defence of Saudi Arabia)

¹⁵⁷ Belonogov, p. 265; Also James A. Baker, III, *Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace*, (New York: Putnam Pub Group, 1995), p. 384

¹⁵⁸ ‘Statement of the President of the USSR’, *Pravda*, 18 January 1991, p. 1

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 282-285

¹⁶⁰ Belonogov’s trips to both countries in January 1991, as reported by BBC, *Gulf Chronology*, January 1991

¹⁶¹ TASS, ‘Statement of the Foreign Ministry’, *Pravda*, 18 January 1991, p. 2

At the same time, Gorbachov requested that the Soviet ambassador in Baghdad contacted Saddam Hussein to find out if he would consider declaring his withdrawal from Kuwait if there was a break in the military operations.¹⁶² The Soviet leader also telephoned President Bush to obtain the halt to the aerial strikes. On a rhetorical level, the Soviet leader argued that there was no sense to continue the war and increase the human losses because the strategic aims were achieved, and the Iraqi military-industrial complex badly damaged.¹⁶³ In reality, his efforts to stop the military actions were motivated by the ambition to show at home, but also to the Arab World that the Soviet Union still mattered in international affairs and that he was able to persuade the U.S. to stop the war. However, both Bush, and later, Saddam Hussein rejected Gorbachov's pleas for peace.

In a new attempt to reactivate his hitherto unsuccessful diplomacy, Gorbachov instructed the new Soviet foreign minister, Alexander Bessmertnykh, to travel to Washington in order to clarify the conditions under which the military operations could be stopped, but also to raise the question of the post-crisis Middle Eastern settlement in the light of the Arab 'street' disapproving reaction to the U.S. strikes on Iraq. Bessmertnykh's mission resulted in the publication of a joint Soviet-American declaration.¹⁶⁴ While Moscow regarded it as a major diplomatic success for the Soviet diplomacy, the U.S. subsequently attempted to diminish its significance.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Belonogov, p. 278

¹⁶³ Gorbachov, p. 700

¹⁶⁴ TASS, 'Joint Soviet-American Declaration', *Pravda*, 30 January 1991, p. 1

¹⁶⁵ Rosenthal, 'Gulf Concession That Wasn't: U.S. Moves to Quell a Furore', *New York Times*, 31 January 1991, p.1; Jan Krauze, 'Washington minimise l'importance de la déclaration commune avec Moscou', *Le Monde*, 1 February 1991, p. 6

In the document, James Baker reiterated that the aim of the coalition was not the destruction of Iraq, but the liberation of Kuwait, and for the first time on the official level declared that a stop of the military operations was 'possible' if Iraq indicated its firm commitment to withdraw from Kuwait. Echoing earlier declaration of the U.S. representative to the U.N., Tom Pickering, he also reaffirmed that the establishment of stability and peace on 'the basis of effective security structures in the region' would become the 'priority task' for the U.S. government after the termination of the Gulf conflict. He also agreed that the elimination of conflicts in the region was impossible without the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Effectively, the declaration linked the Gulf conflict to broader Middle Eastern issues as proposed by Saddam Hussein in his August peace plan, providing for a face saving formula advocated by the Soviet Union, and more importantly, securing the Soviet place in the future Middle Eastern negotiations.

However, Moscow hoped in vain that Baghdad would take this life-line, and declare its withdrawal from Kuwait. Instead, Iraq's defiance led to the intensification of the military operations, which in Soviet eyes threatened to exceed the U.N. mandate for the liberation of Kuwait, and aimed deliberately at the destruction of Iraq.¹⁶⁶ This Soviet concern was expressed by Bessmertnykh during his talks with Baker in Washington on 26 January,¹⁶⁷ as well as in Gorbachov's statement on 9 February, in which the Soviet leader also announced

¹⁶⁶ Volodin, 'Iraqi Tragedy. Situation in the Persian Gulf Continues to Escalate', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 31 January 1991, p. 3; Vasiliev, 'Every One for Himself in War Against Saddam', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 5 February 1991, p. 5; Gudkov, 'The Right Guarantees?', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 February 1991, p. 3

¹⁶⁷ Martin Fletcher, Dejevsky, 'Divisions Over Conflict Pose Further Threat to Summit in Moscow', *The Times*, 28 January 1991, p. 4

his decision to once again send Primakov as his special envoy to Baghdad.¹⁶⁸ Many in the West, but also in the USSR regarded such pronouncements as the beginning of the Soviet effort to distance itself from the U.S.-led coalition in order to improve its standing in the Arab world and position itself for the aftermath of the crisis.¹⁶⁹ It was also argued that the change in Moscow's position toward the conflict was prompted by the increased domestic shift to the right, revealed in the coup in the Baltics, and growing pressure from the conservatives and the military, concerned by the scope of the military offensive.¹⁷⁰

On his return from Baghdad on 13 February, Primakov in a press conference indicated a change in Saddam Hussein's stance, speaking of 'rays of hope' that allowed one to think 'more optimistically'.¹⁷¹ He also announced that Aziz was to arrive in Moscow to continue the talks initiated in Baghdad. At the same time, the special envoy reiterated that the Soviet position remained unchanged, and referred to a number of initiatives proposed by Gorbachov in his latest statement that allowed finding a political solution to the conflict. 'We are against war, and we do everything possible to stop it'.¹⁷²

However, the Soviet leader's subsequent talks with the Iraqi foreign minister revealed no change in Baghdad's position.¹⁷³ Still, Gorbachov, aware that

¹⁶⁸ Gorbachov, 'Statement of the President of the USSR', *Pravda*, 11 February 1991, p. 1; 'Excerpts from Statement by Gorbachov on the Gulf', *New York Times*, 9 February 1991, p.1

¹⁶⁹ Friedman, 'Soviets Say to Hedge on War With Future in Mind', *New York Times*, 28 January 1991, p.7; Editorial, 'Embarras Sovietique', *Le Monde*, 7 February 1991, p.1; Post, Coleman, Rod Nordland, Garrard, 'Moscow's Gulf Game', *Newsweek*, 25 February 1991, p. 15; John Lloyd, 'Gorbachov Plays Peace Card with Eye on West and Party Hard-liners', *Financial Times*, 20 February 1991, p.2; Leonid Vasilyev, 'What is Saddam Hussein Banking On?', *Novoe Vremya*, №. 6, 12-18 February 1991, pp. 14-16

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.; Leyla Boulton, 'Hardliner Strain Soviet Leadership's Gulf Policy', *Financial Times*, 8 February 1991, p. 2; Schmemmann, 'Caution in Moscow', *New York Times*, 9 February 1991, p.1

¹⁷¹ TASS, 'Rays of Hope', *Pravda*, 13 February 1991, p. 2; A detailed account of Primakov's third mission to Baghdad in his interview in 'Tanks Didn't Wait', *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 27 February 1991, p. 4

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Yusin, 'Visit to Moscow by Tareq Aziz', *Izvestia*, 19 February 1991, p. 4

the time for a peaceful solution was running out, was determined to reach a compromise without fail. He therefore proposed a four-point plan, which previewed the Iraqi declaration to withdraw from Kuwait in return for a cease-fire and U.N. guarantees for the security of the retreating Iraqi troops.¹⁷⁴ In his view such a plan opened the way for the calling of a meeting of the U.N. Security Council to review the situation and to address broader regional issues.¹⁷⁵ Aziz accepted the idea and requested time to present it to Saddam Hussein.

Despite Soviet optimism, expressed in a press conference by his spokesman, Ignatenko, late in the evening of 21 February, Gorbachov's proposal received a mixed reaction in the West.¹⁷⁶ In particular, Washington was suspicious of the Iraq's real objectives, which it regarded as delaying the ground offensive.¹⁷⁷ While Gorbachov believed he would be able to further modify his proposal to fit the demands of the U.S. and the coalition, Saddam Hussein thought it possible to adjust the plan to obtain maximum concessions possible.¹⁷⁸ A compromise was finally reached over a seven-point plan prepared by Primakov during the second meeting with Aziz in Moscow on 22 February, which the latter forwarded to the Iraqi leader for approval.¹⁷⁹ The Soviet government appeared optimistic, convinced of having achieved a break-through in the negotiations with Iraq.¹⁸⁰

However, Gorbachov failed to understand that the U.S. at that point was not longer interested in halting the military operations. While he was searching for

¹⁷⁴ Gorbachev, *Mémoires*, p. 703; Enthusiastically reported in the press, but at first, the details of the plan were not disclosed. TASS, 'Plan for peaceful Settlement Proposed', *Pravda*, 18 February 1991, p. 1; First details of the plan: Vasiliev, 'Gorbachov's Plan: Details', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 20 February 1991, p. 3

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Yusin, 'Persian Gulf: Will the Soviet Initiative Stop War?', *Izvestia*, 20 February 1991, p. 4

¹⁷⁷ Maureen Dowd, 'Soviets Say Iraq Accepts Kuwait Pullout Linked to Truce and End to Sanctions; Bush Rejects Conditions; War is to Go On', *New York Times*, 22 February 1991, p. 1

¹⁷⁸ Gorbachev, p. 704

¹⁷⁹ TASS, 'Meeting of M.S. Gorbachov with T. Aziz', *Pravda*, 23 February 1991, p. 1

¹⁸⁰ Schmemmann, 'Moscow Says Iraqis Accept Withdrawal Tied to a Truce', *New York Times*, 22 February 1991, p. 6

ways to find a compromise, Washington was 'looking for a possibility to brush it aside'.¹⁸¹ If for the Soviet leader it was essential that Iraq was willing to accept the U.N. resolution 660 and withdraw from Kuwait, to the U.S. and the coalition it was a question of principle, which would not allow Saddam Hussein to be rewarded for his aggression and regain his military might.¹⁸² Not surprising therefore, that the same day, and before Saddam Hussein had given his final response to the Soviet initiative, President Bush announced his non-negotiable ultimatum to the Iraqi leader, demanding a complete withdrawal from Kuwait within a week to start on 23 February.¹⁸³ Although a few hours later, Saddam Hussein accepted the Soviet plan, it was dismissed as failing to fulfil the conditions of the ultimatum.

Even though for the USSR the Iraqi declaration created a new situation, opening the way for the transition of the military operations onto a political level, Moscow lacked the means to oppose the American decision to continue the war. In vain did Gorbachov, desperate to seize this last opportunity, try to persuade Bush and European leaders to delay the start of the ground offensive to work out a new plan acceptable to the U.S. and the coalition.¹⁸⁴ The ground offensive was initiated as planned on 24 February, and in 100 hours succeeded in achieving all military objectives. In its statement, the Soviet government expressed its regret that the 'instinct of the military solution' prevailed, claiming that Iraq had agreed to withdraw from Kuwait. It stressed that the differences between the formula agreed by Baghdad and the proposals of other states were not large and could be

¹⁸¹ Russell Watson, Ann McDaniel, Garrard, Coleman, 'Why Diplomacy Failed', *Newsweek*, 4 March 1991, p. 32

¹⁸² Alexei Vasiliev, 'USA-USSR: How Will We Live?', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 26 February 1991, p. 3

¹⁸³ 'Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater', *New York Times*, 22 February 1991, p. 1

¹⁸⁴ Gorbachov, pp. 707-708

co-ordinated in the framework of the U.N. Security Council, calling the latter to immediately start a review of the present situation.¹⁸⁵

In his *Memoirs*, Gorbachov deplored that even though the Soviet efforts met the 'blind obstinacy and irrational behaviour' of Saddam Hussein, 'we also have not always found in the U.S. the understanding we have hoped for.'¹⁸⁶ Indeed, apart from political consequences of the military actions against Iraq, the introduction of economic sanctions against Iraq led to the complete rupture of Soviet-Iraqi economic and commercial relations, and a halt to the repayment of the Iraqi debts to the Soviet Union.

¹⁸⁵ TASS, 'Statement of the Soviet Government', *Pravda*, 24 February 1991, p. 1

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 690

Chapter 2: Iraq in Russian politics during the first phase of the new Russian foreign policy 1992-1993

Iraq has become a kind of 'litmus test' in both foreign and domestic policies. Members of the Communist-patriotic opposition who have made frequent trips to Iraq at the expense of its government have demanded that we precipitately take Iraq's side. In contrast to the 'political riffraff', we from the very outset said to the Iraqi leadership: The day you are ready to renounce the role of international riffraff, take a new position and pursue a new policy, Russia will be with you.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev¹

Undoubtedly, Moscow's position in the Gulf crisis during 1990-1991 had clearly demonstrated that the Soviet Union could play a positive role in the Middle East.² Gorbachov's 'New Thinking' had indeed passed the first test - a military confrontation with the U.S. had been avoided and replaced by unprecedented co-operation, the Soviet role in the United Nations had been enhanced, and Western goodwill for the country's domestic reforms had been secured. In addition, Moscow's stance in the conflict yielded immediate gains in the Middle East - the dramatic improvement of relations with the Gulf states, the upgrading of relations with Egypt,³ rapprochement with Iran,⁴ the re-

¹ Mikhail Karpov, 'Moscow Needs a Stable Peace, Washington - a Small Victorious War', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 12 November 1994, p. 1

² Assessing the consequences of the Gulf War for the USSR, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Belonogov argued that in general, the Soviet position in the Middle East had become 'stronger'. Alexander Belonogov, *Foreign Ministry. The Kuwait Crisis*, (Moscow: 'Very Secretly', 2002), p. 406

³ Z. Nalbandyan, 'Ten Years at the Wheel of Egypt', (on the occasion of Hosni Mubarak's visit to Moscow), *Trud*, 26 September 1991, p. 5

⁴ 'Memorandum on Principles of Political, Economic, Cultural and Scientific Co-operation between the USSR and the Islamic Republic of Iran', 26 November 1991, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Russian Foreign Policy, Collected Documents 1990-1992*, (Moscow: International Relations, 1996), pp. 118-121

establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, broken off in 1967,⁵ and participation in the Middle East peace process as a co-sponsor at the side of the U.S.⁶

However, a closer examination of the consequences of the Gulf war for the Soviet Union revealed a grimmer reality.⁷ First, the USSR's inability to prevent the U.S.-led military operation against Baghdad despite its unflagging diplomatic activities and the personal intervention by Gorbachov revealed Russia's impotence to oppose U.S. policies, and exposed the extent of Moscow's strategic weakness and the loss of its superpower status. Secondly, Soviet manoeuvring between participating in the international coalition against Saddam Hussein and protecting its own interests in Iraq created suspicion in the West and the Arab world concerning the real objectives of Moscow's policy.⁸

In addition, Moscow's failure to persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait also indicated that contrary to its assertions, the USSR lacked any influence over Baghdad. This, together with the Soviet inability to continue its generous military and economic assistance to its Middle Eastern clients due to Russia's domestic economic difficulties, contributed further to the erosion of the Soviet position in the Middle East.

Finally, despite the American attempts to emphasise the Soviet role in co-

⁵ Alexander Zhudro, Georgy Shmelyov, 'Diplomatic Relations Between USSR and Israel Restored', *Izvestia*, 19 October 1991, p. 1

⁶ An invitation secured by Gorbachov during Soviet-American Summit in Helsinki in September 1990

⁷ Galia Golan, *Moscow and the Middle East: New Thinking on Regional Conflicts*, (London: Royal Institute for International Affairs, 1992), pp. 66-73

⁸ On the debate within the Bush Administration concerning Moscow's objectives in Iraq and the Middle East in general, Martin Walker, 'The Gulf Crisis: Moscow Role Revives Suspicion', *The Guardian*, 20 February 1991, p.8

sponsoring the Middle Eastern peace process,⁹ Moscow's role appeared merely symbolic, as highlighted by the Madrid Peace Conference in November 1991. Not only was the Soviet role in the preparation of the Conference 'unclear',¹⁰ but Gorbachov also astonished the participants by his speech at the opening of the event, which was much shorter than prescribed by the protocol, and was mostly dedicated to the internal problems faced by the Soviet Union.¹¹

In the view of the Soviet press, some 'small, but meaningful' facts, notably that Gorbachov's speech was distributed with great delay in comparison with other speakers, and only in Spanish, that the Soviet leader had not, like President Bush met with heads of the Arab delegations before his departure from Madrid, and that the Soviet press centre at the Conference in contrast to that of the U.S. remained largely empty,¹² amply illustrated that Gorbachov's task in Madrid 'was not to reconcile the Israelis and the Palestinians', but as a co-sponsor 'to present a false image as an equal leader of a superpower to George Bush'.¹³

Even if Gorbachov tried to maintain the illusion of Soviet superpower status, the disintegration of the USSR in December 1991, put an end to this ambition and reduced Moscow's role to that of the secondary power.¹⁴ The new Russian state that emerged as a legal successor to the Union, not only lacked the economic and military capabilities of the defunct USSR, but also had to adapt to

⁹ Speech of President Bush at the reception in Moscow at the Summit with Gorbachov on 30 July 1991, 'USSR-USA: We Need Each Other', *Izvestia*, 30 July 1991, p. 1; Press-conference of the Moscow Russia-U.S. Summit, 'Presidents Gorbachov and Bush Pleased with Their Meeting', *Izvestia*, 1 August 1991, p. 6

¹⁰ Sergei Filatov, 'What Awaits the Near East', *Pravda*, 19 October 1991, p. 4

¹¹ A. Polonsky, 'Madrid: Babel', *Trud*, 1 November 1991, p. 3

¹² V. Vernikov, A. Ostalsky, 'Surprises of the Madrid Conference', *Izvestia*, 31 October 1991, p. 5

¹³ Stanislav Kondrashov, 'Last Tango in Madrid?', *Izvestia*, 30 October 1991, p. 5

¹⁴ Deputy foreign minister Vladimir Petrovsky, 'New World Order and Us', *Izvestia*, 13 August 1991, p. 4

the altered geo-political realities that resulted from the emergence of newly independent states on the post-Soviet space.¹⁵

It is not surprising therefore, that the dramatic internal and external transformations substantially modified Moscow's interests and objectives in the Middle East, especially since the six former Soviet republics in the south came to directly border the region, bringing Russia new threats such as religious extremism,¹⁶ drugs and weapons smuggling, as well as regional border disputes.¹⁷

To Moscow, this extension of the Middle East¹⁸ created a 'soft underbelly' in the south that was perceived as a source of instability, and therefore a major threat to the security of the Russian Federation.¹⁹ In addition to increased vulnerability, Russia also suddenly faced competition for influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus from other major regional players - Turkey, Iran and China, but also from external powers, such as the U.S., attracted to the region by vast natural gas and oil resources in the Caspian Basin, the prospects of new economic markets, but also by geo-strategic considerations.²⁰

¹⁵ With the disappearance of the USSR, Russia lost direct contact with 30 million Russians who lived outside Russia in the former republics. For an analysis of geo-strategic transformation, Sergei Pechorov, 'Geo-strategic Threats to Russia: Are They Real or Imaginary?', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 March 1992, p. 3

¹⁶ Pechorov, Yuri Tegin, 'Islamic Extremism: New Challenge for Russia?', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 21 April 1992, p. 3

¹⁷ Igor Rotar, 'A Mine Laid by the Kremlin's Mapmakers', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 25 December 1992, pp. 1, 3; Ivan Mogilyovkin, 'Russia Underestimates the Danger from the South', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 15 September 1994, p. 3

¹⁸ Alexei Vasilyev, 'Is Central Asia to be Middle East?', *Novoe Vremya*, May 1992, №. 20, p. 5

¹⁹ Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, *Izvestia*, 18 November 1993, pp. 1, 4

²⁰ Robert O. Freedman, 'Moscow and the Middle East Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union: A Preliminary Analysis', in Roger E. Kanet and Alexander V. Kozhemiakin (eds.), *The Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 139-146; Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game; Blood and Oil in Central Asia*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2004)

The new Russian policy in the Middle East was therefore determined by two main factors – security and economics.²¹ On one hand, Moscow was interested in maintaining regional stability to prevent the spill-over of conflicts into the Russian Federation.²² On the other hand, due to the difficult economic situation within the country that necessitated financial assistance, major investment, and the development of beneficial commercial ties, which would increase the hard currency flow into Russia, the economic factor turned into the key-determinant in Russia's relations with the Middle East.²³

While attempting to forge substantially new ties with its new neighbours, Moscow also had to re-define its relations with the old Soviet allies in the Arab world. Among them, Iraq continued to play a special role in Russia's Middle Eastern policy for a variety of reasons. First of all, Iraq throughout the 1990s, remained one of the most contested issues in Moscow's foreign policy and more than any other country in the region became an indicator of Russia's policy in the Middle East.

On the domestic level, Iraq highlighted the debates on foreign policy orientation and illustrated the disorganisation in Russian foreign policy-making. It revealed the dynamics of various interest groups within Russian politics and their impact on foreign policy formation. On the international level, Iraq highlighted Moscow's position on the global arena and remained an instrument in Russia's relations with the U.S.

²¹ Director of the Near Eastern and North African Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Viktor Posuvalyuk at the meeting with journalists on 3 November 1992, quoted by Ravil Mustafin, 'There is Such a Concept', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 November 1992, p. 3

²² Kozyrev's speech at the opening of the Moscow Meeting on the Middle East, 28 January 1992, *Diplomaticheskyy Vestnik*, 1992, № 4-5, p. 37 ; Alexander Shumilin, 'Tell Me, Who is Your Middle Eastern Friend', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 4 February 1993, p. 3

²³ Filatov, 'Politics is a Subtle Business, But One Would Like Clarity', *Pravda*, 14 November 1992, p. 3; Leo Cooper, *Russia and the World: New State-of-Play on the International Stage*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p.145

Throughout the 1990s, Russian policy towards Baghdad was driven by two contradictory ambitions. On one hand, ever mindful of the need to obtain Western economic assistance for the country's transition to market economy, Moscow was interested in supporting the international community against Iraq to demonstrate that Moscow shared Western values and adhered to international law.

On the other hand, Russia was eager to end sanctions against Iraq because of its significant economic interests in that country, in particular Iraqi debts, estimated at US\$6 billion, participation in the reconstruction of the Iraqi economy and the conclusion of profitable future oil contracts with Baghdad. Therefore, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the new Russian government continued the policy line elaborated by Gorbachov and his team towards Iraq by siding with the international community vis-à-vis Iraq and co-operating with the West in the United Nations, while maintaining friendly ties to Iraq in an attempt to retain the preferential status in Baghdad.

On 3 April 1991, the U.N. Security Council with the support of Russia adopted the Resolution 687, which apart from spelling out provisions directly concerning the Iraqi-Kuwaiti post-crisis settlement, required Baghdad to 'unconditionally accept' the destruction, removal or 'rendering harmless', 'under international supervision', of its chemical and biological weapons, ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometres, as well as nuclear weapons and materials.²⁴ For this purpose, the resolution created a Special Inspection Commission (UNSCOM), which was to verify the elimination of Iraq's chemical and biological programmes, and mandated the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to verify the elimination of the country's nuclear programme. In

²⁴ United Nations Security Council Resolution 687, S/RES/687 (1991)

addition, in October 1991, the U.N. Security Council Resolution 715 approved two plans, one for nuclear items, and another for non-nuclear items, in order to monitor the Iraqi compliance with its obligations under the cease-fire agreement.²⁵

However, in spite of accepting the terms of Resolution 687, Baghdad from the outset greatly impeded the work of the inspectors. It denied the existence of many of its suspected weapons programmes, attempted to hide the prohibited materials and equipment, sought to deceive the inspectors through false documents, misinterpretation of the role of government officials and the purpose of facilities, as well as frustrated inspections in the field by moving equipment to hiding places and refusing entry to sites used for the development of its military programmes. According to Baghdad, the inspectors exceeded the responsibilities accorded to them by the U.N. mandate and were attempting to obtain secret information of purely scientific interest.²⁶

In addition, Saddam Hussein tried to drive a wedge between the members of the U.N. Security Council by offering advantageous economic co-operation in return for support for the lifting of sanctions. The Iraqi tactic of 'cheat and retreat'²⁷ was to increase periodically the tensions in its relations with the U.N. through non-cooperation with the inspection team in an attempt to tie Iraqi compliance to the inspection regime to the weakening of sanctions.

During the first major crisis due Iraq's defiance of the UNSCOM mandate in February 1992, the Security Council declared that Iraq was in the 'material breach' of Resolution 687. A high-level mission led by the Swedish diplomat Rolf

²⁵ United Nations Security Council Resolution 715, S/RES/715 (1991)

²⁶ For more detailed on Iraq's confrontation with the UN during that period: Greg Saiontz, 'A Chronology of Diminishing Response: UN Reactions to Iraqi Provocations Since the Gulf War', *Research Notes*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 3 June 1997, pp. 1-3; Georgy Stepanov, 'UN Declares Ultimatum on Baghdad', *Izvestia*, 2 March 1992, p. 1

²⁷ Marie Colvin, James Adams, 'Iraq Reneges Over Deal on Missiles Sites', *Sunday Times*, 11 July 1993, p. 1

Ekeus, the Executive Chairman of the Commission, was dispatched to Baghdad with a statement demanding Iraq give necessary assurances of compliance to the Security Council resolutions, or face serious consequences.²⁸

However, the mission failed to secure Baghdad's co-operation,²⁹ prompting the Security Council to condemn Iraq's failure to comply with its obligations to accept the destruction of its weapons.³⁰ In spite of the demarches of Iraq's Deputy Foreign Minister Tareq Aziz in New York, aimed at reaching a compromise with the U.N.,³¹ the Security Council adopted an ultimatum, calling on Iraq to commence the fulfilment of its obligations within two weeks. The ultimatum provided a legal basis for a limited military action against Iraq.³² Moscow supported this decision, the Russian Ambassador to the U.S., Vladimir Lukin declaring that his government 'is willing to be a part of international community of civilised nations' and would support the use of force against Iraq to obtain the liquidation of the Iraqi weapons proscribed by the U.N.³³

Even though this crisis ended peacefully with Iraq's agreement on 19 March 1992, to provide UNSCOM with a 'full, final and complete' declaration of its weapons programmes, on 5 July 1992, Baghdad once again initiated a confrontation with the U.N. by barring the inspectors from entering the Ministry of Agriculture that held the documents and materials on Iraqi military programmes. The Security Council issued a statement declaring Iraq's conduct as

²⁸ Statement by the President of the UN Security Council, 19 February 1992, United Nations Security Council document S/23609

²⁹ Special Report to the Security Council 26 February 1992, United Nations Security Council document S/23643

³⁰ Statement by the President of the UN Security Council, 28 February 1992, United Nations Security Council document S/23663

³¹ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 10 March 1992, p. 3

³² Stepanov, 'U.S. and Britain Obtained Legal Pretext from UN for Military Action Against Iraq', *Izvestia*, 14 March 1992, p. 4

³³ *Ibid.*

constituting a 'material breach' of the provisions of the 687 Resolution.³⁴ At the request of the Council, Ekeus once again travelled to Baghdad to hold talks with the Iraqi officials, but did not succeed in changing Iraq's stance.³⁵

Following three weeks of crisis, the U.S. together with Britain and France issued a 72-hour ultimatum of renewed military action against Iraq, threatening air strikes against selected military targets, as well as buildings, earmarked for destruction by the U.N.³⁶ As before, Iraq backed away from the military confrontation, and Ekeus reached a compromise with the Iraqi Ambassador to the U.N., Abdul Amir al-Anbari, whereby an inspector team from countries which had not participated in the Gulf war, notably from Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland and Russia, was allowed to proceed.³⁷

As during the previous crisis, the Russian government maintained its stance against Iraq. In a telephone conversation with George Bush, President Yeltsin received 'high praise' for Russia's position that 'firmly supports' the U.N. Security Council resolutions.³⁸ *Moskovskie Novosti* observed that the times, when Baghdad 'skillfully played out the confrontation between East and West' had passed, and that Saddam Hussein would no longer be able 'to take advantage' of the Cold War. At the same time, it emphasised that Moscow could play a positive role in the current situation, having the opportunity to mediate actively in the

³⁴ Statement by the President of the UN Security Council, United Nations Security Council 6 July 1992, United Nations Security Council document S/24240

³⁵ Report of the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission to the Security Council, 20 July 1992, S/24443

³⁶ Leonard Doyle, 'Allies Threaten Air Strikes on Iraq', *The Independent*, 25 July 1992, p. 11

³⁷ Stepanov, 'Saddam Hussein Goes Back on His Word in the Conflict with the UN and Gains Time', *Izvestia*, 27 July 1992, p. 4

³⁸ Stepanov, 'While UN Inspectors Searched for Documents, Saddam Hussein Swam Across the Tigris', *Izvestia*, 30 July 1992, p. 5

region, in order to regain the reputation of an influential great power and to assist in the prevention of yet another regional conflict.³⁹

While co-operating with the West, Moscow was irritated with Baghdad because of the latter's defiant behaviour, which precluded all Russian efforts at the Security Council to raise the question of the lifting of sanctions.⁴⁰ Moscow's annoyance with Iraq was expressed in a statement issued by the Russian Foreign Ministry on 22 August, which raised concern about Baghdad's repression of the Shiite population in the south and the economic blockade of the north, its defiance of the U.N. resolutions and impediment of the work of the UNSCOM.⁴¹ The statement emphasised that Iraq's action created a 'serious threat for the security of the region located in the immediate proximity of the southern Russian borders', as well as for the security of 'our friends' in the Persian Gulf, and for international peace and stability. Regarding Russia's position, the document stated:

The Russian side has repeatedly raised the question with the leadership of Iraq on the inadmissibility of political games around the decision of the international community. The time of admonition and persuasion has passed. No one has the right to disregard the authority of the U.N. unpunished and to ignore the Security Council resolutions. The international community justifiably demands Iraq to comply with these resolutions, and if needed, will use all the necessary means to obtain compliance. In accordance with the U.N. Security Council Resolution 687, Russia will support all necessary measures with regard to Iraq, called upon to provide for the fulfilment of the U.N. decisions on post-crisis settlement in the Persian Gulf.⁴²

³⁹ Andrei Shumikhin, 'Damocles' Sword over Baghdad', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 2 August 1992, p. 5

⁴⁰ Already in 1991, the USSR proposed the easing of sanctions on Iraq in the UN Security Council, but it was dismissed.

⁴¹ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, 22 August 1992, *Diplomaticheskyy Vestnik*, №. 17-18, 1992, p. 44

⁴² Ibid.

Moscow also decided to support its rhetoric by practical actions and to respond to the call for Russia's more active role in the Gulf and its participation in the maintenance of regional stability on the part of the Gulf states,⁴³ which the Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev visited at the end of April in an effort to obtain financial assistance and promote Russian arm sales.⁴⁴ In September 1992, it therefore dispatched two military ships – the anti-submarine ship *Admiral Vinogradov* and the tanker *Boris Butoma* to the Persian Gulf to bear a 'concrete even if modest' contribution to the provision of security in the region.⁴⁵ The Russian ships were to take part in operations to enforce the U.N. resolutions on Iraq and to guarantee safe navigation for Russian vessels in the Gulf, but not to participate in combat operations alongside coalition forces.⁴⁶

Commenting on the government's decision to send ships to the Gulf, the military newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* acknowledged that it would be 'naïve' to think that the Russian vessels would 'in any substantial way influence the strength of the group of the three Western states' in the Gulf, but viewed this step as having a 'symbolic character'.⁴⁷ In contrast, *Pravda* argued that it was not international law, principles of justice, nor Russian national interests that drove this decision, but 'merely the desire to please the almighty West'.⁴⁸ In turn, the Western press perceived the deployment of Russian ships in the Gulf as possible evidence of a change in Moscow's policy towards Iraq, which provided a

⁴³ Boris Vinogradov, 'Bahrain is Awaiting the Russians and Hopes for Their Presence in the Persian Gulf', *Izvestia*, 25 August 1992, p. 6

⁴⁴ Maksim Yusin, 'Our Visit is a Drive for Markets, Including Arms Market', *Izvestia*, 5 May 1992, p. 6

⁴⁵ Alexei Portansky, 'Russia Dispatches Two Military Ships to the Persian Gulf and Joins Military Sanctions Against Iraq', *Izvestia*, 2 September 1992, p. 4

⁴⁶ Boris Vinogradov, 'St. Andrew's Flag in Persian Gulf', *Izvestia*, 6 October 1992, p. 4

⁴⁷ Ravil Mustafin, 'Russia is Sending Military Ships to the Gulf', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 3 September 1992, p. 3

⁴⁸ Vladimir Belyakov, 'The Objective – Destruction of Iraq', *Pravda*, 19 September 1992, p. 7

‘political boost for the U.S. and President Bush, who has sought broad international support’ in the latest confrontation with Baghdad.⁴⁹

The Russian position on Iraq during 1992 did indeed correspond to the pro-Western approach adopted by President Boris Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in the aftermath of the disintegration of the USSR, and marked the first phase of Russian foreign policy.⁵⁰ Despite the changed internal and external situation, Moscow’s foreign policy priorities remained essentially the same as during the *perestroika* era, namely the creation of favourable external conditions for domestic reforms aimed at a transition to a market economy and democratisation.⁵¹ For the achievement of these objectives, as had been the case in the final years of the Soviet Union, diplomacy was placed at the forefront of foreign strategy, and the reliance on international mechanisms, notably the United Nations, was viewed as the only way to project Russian power abroad.⁵²

However, Kozyrev significantly broadened Gorbachov’s notion of co-operation with the West by regarding it as Russia’s ‘natural ally’, and identifying the main objective of Russian foreign policy as ‘entering the community of civilised nations of the Northern Hemisphere’.⁵³ Considering the West as a model

⁴⁹ Michael Evans, Christopher Walker, ‘Russian Ships Head for Gulf Patrol as Shias Stir Rebellion’, *The Times*, 2 September 1992, p. 9

⁵⁰ According to some interpretations, however, the period between December 1991 and early summer 1993 was classified as the second phase in Russia’s foreign policy, the first being Russia’s attempt to obtain sovereignty from the USSR in 1991. Vitaly Zhurkin, ‘Phases in Modern Russian Foreign Policy’, pp. 3-9; On the political and technical issues related to the formation of Russian (in contrast to Soviet) foreign policy in 1990-1991, Dmitri Rurikov, ‘How it All Began: An Essay on New Russia’s Foreign Policy’, in Teresa Pelton Johnson and Steven E. Miller (eds.), *Russian Security after the Cold War*, (Washington: Brassey’s, 1994), pp. 125-147

⁵¹ ‘Yeltsin Speaks about Foreign Policy at the Meeting of Staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 October 1992, p. 1

⁵² Emphasis on Russia’s active role in the UN revealed in Kozyrev’s Speech at the 47th Session of the UN General Assembly, 22 September 1992, *Diplomaticheskyy Vestnik*, №. 19-20, 1992, pp. 18-20; An Analysis of Russia and the UN in Nicholas Hopkinson, ‘The United Nations in the New World Disorder’, *Wilton Park Paper*, (London: HMSO, 1993), № 75, July 1993, p. 10-11

⁵³ Interview with Galina Sidorova, ‘And Yet Russia is Destined to be a Great Power’, *Novoe Vremya*, №. 3, January 1992, p. 24; Similarly, addressing the first summit meeting of the U.N.

for political and economic development, and more importantly, as the main source of much required financial assistance,⁵⁴ the Russian leadership, regarded co-operation with the U.S., even at the expense of Russia's interests in various parts of the world, of primary importance.

As a consequence, in late December 1991, Moscow in its eagerness to undo all aspects of Soviet policy, declared that agreements between the USSR and North Korea, Cuba and Iraq did not conform to Russia's 'criteria of expediency'.⁵⁵ In March 1992, Russia for the first time voted for a U.N. resolution condemning the Castro regime for violation of human rights,⁵⁶ and under U.S. pressure cancelled the profitable sale of rocket engines to India.⁵⁷ The new Russian government also radically changed its attitude towards NATO on the grounds that the latter was gradually transforming into a political organisation that could play a positive role in Europe.⁵⁸ Yeltsin in his address to the participants of the inaugural meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in December 1991, declared that even though Russia 'today does not raise the question of joining NATO', it is ready to 'consider that as a long-term political objective'.⁵⁹

Regarding the Middle East, on 15 April 1992, Russia voted for the imposition of sanctions against Libya, which for the USSR had ranked second only to Iraq in terms of arms sales profit and, following the disintegration of the Union, was one of the few countries in the Third World to agree to continue its

Security Council, President Yeltsin stated that Russia regarded United States and the West as not just partners, but allies. *Diplomaticheskyy Vestnik*, 1992, №. 4-5, p. 49

⁵⁴ Andrei Kozyrev, 'The Strategy of Partnership', *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn*, №.5, 1994, pp. 184-85

⁵⁵ Interfax, *Izvestia*, 28 December 1991, p. 2

⁵⁶ Mikhail Kozhukov, 'Former Ally Accuses Russia of Treason', *Izvestia*, 4 March 1992, p. 1

⁵⁷ Skosyrev, 'Bush Administration Threatens Russia with Economic Sanctions', *Izvestia*, 5 April 1992, pp. 1, 6; David Hearst, 'Anger as Moscow Defers to U.S. over Rocket Sale', *The Guardian*, 22 July 1993, p. 10

⁵⁸ V. Kozin, 'NATO's New Dimension', *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn*, №. 3, 1993, pp. 58-59

⁵⁹ *Diplomaticheskyy Vestnik*, 1992, №. 1, pp. 12-13; On Russian relations with NATO in 1992-1993, Jeffrey Surovell, *Capitalist Russia and the West*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 96-117

debt repayment to Russia.⁶⁰ Even though Kozyrev attempted to find a compromise by proposing that Colonel Qaddafi hand over the two Libyans, accused of involvement in the terrorist acts against a U.S. and a French aircraft in 1988 and 1989, to the jurisdiction of the U.N. Secretary-General and a trial in a neutral country, his mediation efforts proved unsuccessful.⁶¹ In response to Moscow's stance, Libya organised an attack on the Russian embassy in Tripoli in April 1992, and refused to supply oil to 'unfriendly countries', including Russia.⁶²

With regard to the Middle Eastern peace process, in spite of Kozyrev's assertions that Russia remained a great power, the country's difficult economic situation and disorganisation had dramatically reduced its ability to play a meaningful role in the multi-lateral negotiations, or pursue a policy independent from the U.S.⁶³ In particular, Moscow's Multilateral Organisational Session in January 1992 demonstrated that 'Russians have been unable to live up to the role demanded of them.'⁶⁴ Before the Conference, Kozyrev himself admitted to have a 'headache' concerning the organisation of the event, as the 'poverty causes troubles in carrying out our diplomatic functions.'⁶⁵ At the same time, the Foreign Minister considered Russia's sponsorship as 'highly important politically' because Moscow had to prove that it could play a role in the Middle East settlement equal to its predecessor.⁶⁶ In his view, it also had economic implications – 'if Russia is

⁶⁰ U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1963-1973*, Washington D.C. 1975, p. 70 and *1969-1978*, Washington D.C., 1980, p. 160; Iputev, 'Libya is Keeping the Doors Open', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, p. 6

⁶¹ Yusin, 'Qaddafi Rejects the Compromise Proposed by Russia', *Izvestia*, 3 March 1992, p. 5

⁶² Zgersky, *Novoe Vremya*, April 1992, p. 18

⁶³ Filatov, 'Zero Option', *Pravda*, 30 January 1992, p. 4

⁶⁴ Editorial, 'Stalemate in Moscow', *The Times*, 29 January 1992, p. 11

⁶⁵ Interview in *Novoe Vremya*, 'And Yet Russia is Destined to be a Great Power', January 1992, p. 21

⁶⁶ Ibid.

unable to hold this three-day-long event, how would it be possible to invest there?’⁶⁷

However, it was not the financial side that proved to be the main problem,⁶⁸ but the boycott of the conference by the Palestinian delegation, ‘linked to Moscow by long-standing ties of solidarity’,⁶⁹ the refusal of former Soviet allies Syria and Lebanon to participate, as well as the absence of the Russian President himself.⁷⁰ Subsequently, despite Kozyrev’s assertions that Russia ‘would continue to assist the advancement of the peace process’, not only ‘as a co-sponsor’, but also ‘in terms of our traditional friendly relations with the peoples of the Middle East’,⁷¹ the initiative was entirely taken over by Washington.⁷²

It is not surprising therefore, that Kozyrev’s foreign policy was heavily criticised by various political factions within Russia, who argued that the country’s foreign policy lacked a fundamental sense of national interest and was too accommodating to the West at Russia’s expense.⁷³ However, whereas there

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ According the Arab sources the bill was footed by the Gulf Co-operation Council. Annika Savill, ‘Palestinians Tire of Bending over Backwards’, *The Independent*, 22 January 1992, p. 12

⁶⁹ Skosyrev, ‘Mideast Conference Opens in Moscow Without Palestinians’, *Izvestia*, 28 January 1992, p. 1; On the decline of relations between the USSR and the PLO following the Gulf crisis, Roland Dannreuther, *The Soviet Union and the PLO*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), pp. 167-171

⁷⁰ Jonathan Steele, Wafa Amr, ‘Yeltsin Misses Middle East Talks’, *The Guardian*, 28 January 1992, p. 8

⁷¹ Sergei Strokan, ‘Middle Eastern Break-Through on Washington’s Meadow’, *Moskovskie Novosti*, 19 September 1993, p. 14

⁷² Yossi Beilin, Israeli politician and initiator of the secret talks with the Palestinians, which led to the Oslo Accords in 1993, observed that President Clinton had an ‘emotional connection’ with the Peace Process, his administration ‘highly driven’ to revolve the conflict. Consequently, Russian and other European efforts to become involved were ‘politely declined.’ *The Path to Geneva*, (New York: RDV Books, 2004), p. 18; Dalia Dassa Kaye also noted that U.S. policymakers did not focus on the multilateral track after Moscow because it had already achieved its objective of getting Israel to join the Madrid Process. ‘Madrid’s Forgotten Forum: The Middle East Multilaterals’, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 20, №. 1, Winter 1997, p. 173

⁷³ Alexei Arbatov, ‘Russian Foreign Policy Priorities for the 1990s’, in Teresa Pelton Johnson and Steven E. Miller (eds.), *Russian Security after the Cold War*, (Washington: Brassey’s, 1994), pp. 10-11

seemed to be a broad consensus that Russian foreign policy needed to be corrected, there was disagreement as to what direction it ought to take.

In fact, the debates concerning Russia's foreign policy orientation date back to the late 1980s, but in particular to the Gulf crisis of 1990-91, which for the first time created a dilemma between developing a real partnership with the West at the expense of Soviet interests in Iraq and continuing the old Soviet alliance to the detriment of Moscow's relations with the developed world. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, this discussion had transformed into a broader debate concerning Russia's place in the world, and on the philosophic-cultural level, regarding the country's European versus Eurasian identity.⁷⁴ In that sense, Iraq's defeat in the Gulf war represented a new point of departure in Russian foreign policy, and Moscow's policy towards Baghdad during the 1990s appeared to be an indicator of the direction that new Russia foreign policy chose to pursue in foreign affairs.

The debate on foreign policy orientation was dominated by three opposing camps.⁷⁵ The pro-Westernists ('Atlantists'), like Kozyrev, viewed Russia's future as a becoming a part of the Western civilisation, regarded the country's national interests as best served through close relations with the West and the U.S., and rejected the idea of Russia's dominance of the post-Soviet space.⁷⁶ This view was diametrically opposed by those who rejected co-operation with the West, contending that Russia was sufficiently powerful and would overcome internal

⁷⁴ Konstantin Pleshakov, 'The Russian Dilemma', *Novoe Vremya*, №. 2, January 1992, pp. 14-15

⁷⁵ The divide is usually seen between the two main camps – 'Atlantism' and 'Eurasianism'. For an in-depth analysis, Sergei Stankevich, 'A Power in Search of Itself', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 28 March 1992, p. 4

⁷⁶ Kozyrev, 'A Transformed Russia in a New World', *Izvestia*, 2 January 1992, p. 3

difficulties without help from abroad.⁷⁷ In their opinion, the West was not interested in reviving Russian power and preferred to take advantage of the country's weakness for its own political ends.⁷⁸ The proponents of this view – communists and nationalists – continued to perceive the West as a threat to Russia and advocated stronger ties with Russia's traditional allies.⁷⁹ In contrast to pro-Westernists and anti-Westernists, the third camp ('Eurasionists'), comprising moderate liberals and centrists, while acknowledging the necessity of a strategic alliance with the West, rejected Russia's one-sided orientation in favour of a diversified foreign policy that in their opinion would better serve the restoration of Russia's power.⁸⁰

From the outset, the issue of Iraq was used by the opposition in the internal political struggle to undermine the Russian government.⁸¹ In particular, the communists and ultra-nationalists who continued to regard Saddam Hussein as an ideological ally in the 'anti-imperialist struggle', as well as the military-industrial complex, that viewed Iraq as a vast market for the Russian weapons, were unwilling to abandon Baghdad. Hence, Moscow's firm line against Saddam was challenged in two ways. Moderate members of the opposition led by vice-president Alexander Rutskoi and the parliamentary speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, exercised strong pressure on Kozyrev in the Duma in an effort to attack his policy

⁷⁷ For example, interview by Anne McElvoy with Vladimir Zhirinovskiy in *The Times*, 'Zhirinovskiy Warns West to Keep Out', 21 December 1993, p. 1

⁷⁸ E. Pozdnyakov, 'We Ourselves Have Brought Down Our House, and We Alone Have to Rebuild It', *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn*, №. 3-4, 1992, pp. 147-48

⁷⁹ For example, the leader of the Communist Party of Russia, Gennady Zyuganov, *Russia and the Contemporary World*, (Moscow: Observer, 1995), pp. 61-79; or Interview with Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Supreme Soviet, by Andrew Higgins, 'Iraq under Fire: Russian: Weakness Attacked', *The Independent*, 19 January 1993, p. 12; Sergei Baburin, *Russia's Path*, (Moscow: ANKO, 1995), pp. 144-145

⁸⁰ For example, Sergei Goncharov, 'Russia's Special Interests – What Are They', *Izvestia*, 25 February 1992, p. 6; Andranik Migranyan, 'True and False Guiding Points in Foreign Policy', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 4 August 1992, p. 4

⁸¹ On Russia's political landscape, see interview with Sergei Stankevich, State Advisor for Political Questions, in 'What Party Life is Like Today', *Izvestia*, 20 April 1992, p. 2

towards Iraq and other former Soviet allies as damaging to Russia's national interests.⁸² Parliamentary pressure was accompanied by an ongoing campaign in the communist and nationalist media, which attacked Kozyrev personally, as well as his foreign policy.⁸³ Moderate democrats also criticised Kozyrev in the media for lack of vision and for the disorganisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁸⁴

There were also various opposition groups who established direct contacts with the Iraqi regime and travelled to Iraq, where they issued statements contradicting official Russian policy and publicised cordial relations with Saddam Hussein. Already in late July 1991, a delegation consisting of members of the conservative parliamentary faction *Soyuz* visited Baghdad and reached an agreement with the representatives of the Iraqi parliament to develop relations between the parliamentarians of both countries by 'exchanging visits and co-ordinating actions between them at international conferences.'⁸⁵ The joint declaration adopted on 1 August 1991, remained silent on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, condemning the 'aggression against Iraq'.⁸⁶ It stated the 'necessity to lift the economic sanctions against Iraq', advocated 'non-interference in Iraqi internal affairs', condemned the position of the U.S. Administration and 'some European

⁸² Yusin, 'Supreme Soviet Preparing to Review Russian Foreign Policy', *Izvestia*, 18 December 1992, p. 4; One of the main themes was the accusation that Russia bears financial losses as a result of sanctions on Yugoslavia, Libya and Iraq. For example, Konstantin Eggert on the report by the Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Sergei Glazyev, '16 Billion in Lost Economic Benefits: Experts Refute Minister's Opinion', *Izvestia*, 21 January 1993, p. 1

⁸³ Tomas Kolesnichenko, 'Let's Take a Look at Ourselves', *Pravda*, 15 February 1992, pp. 1, 5; Yuri Glukhov, 'The Moles of History Dig Blindly', *Pravda*, 24 February 1992, pp. 1, 3; Vasily Lipsky, Chairman of the Board of Free Russia People's Party, 'When Will There Be a Reassessment of Values?', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 26 June 1992, p. 7

⁸⁴ Vitaly Survillo, 'Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Cross Section of a Skyscraper', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 May 1992, p. 4; Filatov, 'Foreign Ministry Admits We were Bought', *Pravda*, 4 December 1992, p. 3

⁸⁵ A. Ostalsky, Gennady Charodeyev, "'Ours' Choose Saddam Hussein', *Izvestia*, 10 August 1991, p. 4

⁸⁶ Ibid.

countries' and supported the 'ambition of the Iraqi side to renew economic co-operation with the USSR'.⁸⁷

In autumn 1992, a delegation of members of the ultra-nationalist Liberal-Democratic Party, headed by its leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky travelled to Iraq, where it met with Iraqi officials and was received by Saddam Hussein.⁸⁸ Embarrassed by the publicity of Zhirinovsky's trip, which was perceived in the West as the beginning of the weakening of Russia's resolve with regard to Iraq, the Foreign Ministry organised a briefing, stating:

The impression is being made that the destructive forces of Russia and the Iraqi authorities are attempting to create an alliance to counter the firm position adopted by the international community with regard to Iraq. The Iraqi propaganda attempted to present Zhirinovsky as one of the most influential figures in Russia... Zhirinovsky's voyage has no practical meaning for Russia's foreign policy course.⁸⁹

However, this did not stop the pilgrimage of the opposition to Baghdad, and a few weeks later Sergei Baburin, leader of the conservative *Russian National Union* travelled to the Iraqi capital to meet Saddam, convinced that Russia ought to revive its old alliance with Baghdad.⁹⁰

Throughout the autumn of 1992, attacks on Yeltsin increased as a result of conservative opposition to his economic reform and privatisation. The foreign minister also came under fire because of his policy towards the former Yugoslavia, Libya and Iraq. All these prompted Kozyrev's warnings at the

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Vladimir Zhirinovsky, 'Outcome of the Trip to Baghdad', in *Vladimir Zhirinovsky Speaks with Russia*, (Moscow: RAYT, 1995), Vol.1, p.193-201

⁸⁹ Statement of the Foreign Ministry, quoted in Ibid., p. 193

⁹⁰ Helen Womack, 'Russia: Hard-line Communists Take Road to Fascism', *The Independent*, 1 December 1992, p. 11

extraordinary meeting of the Council on Foreign Affairs on 27 November, that the country had entered a 'period of acute confrontation on questions of fundamental significance' and that 'the entire political field of our country is occupied...either by the outright red-brown opposition, or by the grey opposition, which is dragging us into a swamp.'⁹¹ At the meeting of the European Foreign Ministers in Stockholm in December 1992, Kozyrev in a mock speech also announced a hard-line shift to alert the West to the threat to the existing policy.⁹²

As consequence of domestic pressure on the part of the increasingly right-wing parliament, but also because of growing disillusionment with the West and its less than expected economic assistance – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) strategy that would have brought US\$24 billion to Russia was regarded as 'stillborn'⁹³ - Russian foreign policy by 1993, was gradually shifting towards a more assertive and pragmatic approach in an attempt to diversify the country's foreign relations as an alternative way to earn hard currency, but also to regain Russia's position as a great power. In December 1992, Yeltsin paid a visit to China, concluding 24 intergovernmental and interdepartmental agreements on various aspects of Russian-Chinese co-operation.⁹⁴ In late January 1993, Deputy Foreign Minister, Georgy Kunadze, visited North Korea as a special representative of the President to revive the political dialogue which was

⁹¹ Quoted in Karpov, 'Democratic Forces are Mobilising', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 28 November, p. 1

⁹² Robert Mauthner, 'Scare by Russia Stuns Security Conference', *The Financial Times*, 15 December 1992, p. 1

⁹³ John Lloyd, 'Russia's Love Affair with West Ends in Disappointment: Moscow is Counting the Cost in Foreign Policy Terms of Trying to Live up to Western Expectations', *Financial Times*, 25 February 1993, p. 2

⁹⁴ *Diplomaticheskyy Vestnik*, № 1-2, January 1993, p. 1

interrupted at the beginning of 1992, and to re-establish trade and economic ties with Pyongyang.⁹⁵

The shift in Russian foreign policy was also illustrated by Moscow's changing attitude to the renewed crisis in Iraq in January 1993. The new crisis was prompted by Baghdad's defiance of the U.N., and its confrontation with the U.S. and the coalition. On 27 December, the U.S. shot down an Iraqi jet that violated the no-fly zone in southern Iraq,⁹⁶ which was established with Russian support by the U.S., Britain and France in August 1992 north of 32nd parallel to protect the Shiite minority against Baghdad's military intervention.⁹⁷ Subsequently, Baghdad redeployed eight SA-3 and 12 SA-2 anti-aircraft missiles launchers in the no-fly zone, threatening the allied patrols. In response, Washington together with Britain, France and Russia delivered an ultimatum to Iraq, demanding it to remove the launchers to their original location within 48 hours, or face possible military action.⁹⁸

Even though the Iraqi leaders issued a series of bellicose statements,⁹⁹ Saddam Hussein removed the missiles from the southern no-fly zone, but once the ultimatum had expired, and in spite of the American warnings that action would be taken without warning if Iraq redeployed its missiles in threatening manner, put its anti-aircraft missiles on operational status in the northern no-fly zone, established by the allies in April 1991 south of 36th parallel to protect the Kurdish population.

⁹⁵ Alexander Zhebin, Vadim Tkachenko, 'Kunadze Flies to Pyongyang Via Beijing', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 February 1993, p. 4

⁹⁶ Stepanov, 'U.S. Policy Towards Baghdad Remains Unchanged', *Izvestia*, 28 December 1992, p. 4

⁹⁷ Antoine Jacob, 'Iraq Attacks 'Provocation' by West', *The Independent*, 20 August 1992, p. 9

⁹⁸ Editorial, 'Little Dictator', *The Times*, 8 January 1993, p. 15

⁹⁹ Patrick Brogan, 'Saddam Withdraws No-Fly Zone Missiles', *The Observer*, 10 January 1993, p. 1

On 7 January, Iraq also initiated a renewed confrontation with the U.N., by declaring it would no longer permit the U.N. inspectors to use their own aircraft to fly into, or land in Iraq.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, Baghdad banned the flight into the country of 70 inspectors returning from abroad. The Security Council called the action unacceptable, warned of serious consequences if the decision was not reversed, and issued a statement describing Iraq as being in the 'material breach' of Resolution 687.¹⁰¹

However, continuing its confrontational course, Baghdad also challenged the U.N. border demarcation between Iraq and Kuwait. First on 2 and then on 10 January, five hundred Iraqis crossed into the demilitarised zone between Iraq and Kuwait, seizing weapons that were left behind following Iraq's retreat and placed under the authority of the U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM).¹⁰² In spite of the official protest of the Iraqi action by the emissaries from the U.S., Britain, France and Russia to the Iraqi Ambassador to the U.N., on 13 January, several hundred Iraqis again crossed the demilitarised zone and began dismantling weapons warehouses.

As a result of this Iraqi defiance, on 13 January, the U.S. together with Britain and France conducted air-strikes against Iraqi anti-aircraft missile sites and related control facilities in the southern no-fly zone.¹⁰³ Whereas the military action had a limited impact on Baghdad's stance in its confrontation with the United Nations - the Iraqi Ambassador to the U.N. informed the President of the Security Council that Iraq would permit the flights by the U.N. inspectors in their

¹⁰⁰ Iraq's written notification of the UNSCOM Office in Baghdad on 7 January 1993, *Yearbook of the United Nations* 1993, p. 414

¹⁰¹ Statement of the President of the UN Security Council, 8 January 1993, S/25081

¹⁰² Special Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, 10 January 1993, United Nations Security Council document S/25085

¹⁰³ Vladimir Kozlovsky, 'President Bush's Last Battle', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 15 January 1993, pp. 1-2

own aircraft, provided they entered the Iraqi airspace from Jordanian airspace,¹⁰⁴ and promised that the incursions into the demilitarised zone would cease - it did not change the latter's position with regard to 'no-fly zones'. Saddam Hussein vowed that he would continue to resist the enforcement of the no-fly zones, instructed the military to fire on coalition planes over Iraqi territory, and on 17 January, activated its targeting radar in northern Iraq.

In response, the coalition on 17 January, conducted an air-strike against the radar site and shot down an Iraqi MiG-23 that crossed into the northern no-fly zone. Countering the Iraqi refusal to grant the inspectors unconditional clearance for landing,¹⁰⁵ the same day the U.S. also launched cruise missiles at Zafaraniya manufacturing complex outside Baghdad, which was suspected to produce components for the country's nuclear programme.

Even though Russia participated in exercising political pressure on Baghdad, Moscow refrained from participating in the allied air-strikes against Iraq. Nevertheless, demonstrating its solidarity with the coalition, the Russian Foreign Ministry in its statement expressed hope that Baghdad would submit to the will of the international community and emphasised support for the international community's efforts to 'ensure compliance with the decisions adopted collectively under the U.N. aegis to eliminate the consequences of the Iraqi aggression.'¹⁰⁶ The statement pointed out that Russia, via its embassy in Baghdad, and in other ways, had repeatedly urged Iraq to co-operate with the

¹⁰⁴ Report to the Security Council by the Executive Chairman of UNSCOM, 2 March 1993, United Nations Security Council document S/25172

¹⁰⁵ It was not until 19 January that Iraq informed the Commission that it would allow the resumption of UNSCOM flights in accordance with established procedures.

¹⁰⁶ 'Russian Federation Supreme Soviet Fears Russia Will be Drawn Into Conflict, While Foreign Ministry Reaffirms Commitment to World Community', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 15 January 1993, p. 2

United Nations and refrain from steps that destabilised the situation in the region.¹⁰⁷

However, while supporting the military action against Iraq by the allied forces, Moscow disapproved of the subsequent American air-strikes on Baghdad because of domestic considerations. The Foreign Ministry's situation appeared even more awkward when it became known that the Kremlin had not been notified about the impending U.S. aerial attacks, with President Yeltsin learning about the events from news reports.¹⁰⁸ Not surprisingly therefore, the Russian government was irritated not only by Iraq's confrontational position towards the U.S.-led coalition and the U.N., but also, and to a greater degree, by Washington's unilateral decision to conduct air-strikes against Iraq without seeking the approval of the U.N., nor consulting with Moscow on the issue.

The senior Middle East official at the Foreign Ministry, Viktor Gogitidze, pointed out that 'our line towards it [Iraq] would be different', if Baghdad 'fulfilled the demands of the U.N. resolutions'.¹⁰⁹ But he also observed that raids against Iraq 'would not achieve their desired goals'.¹¹⁰ Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev in a note to the U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger emphasised that the actions against Iraq ought to be 'adequate' and 'flow from agreed decisions' by the Security Council.¹¹¹

Similarly, in its statement, the Foreign Ministry, called for a review of the situation by the Security Council. It acknowledged that the 'key to the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Serge Schmemmann, 'Russian Sensitivities: As Choices Become Harder, Moscow Grows Sceptical About U.S. Policies', *New York Times*, 27 January 1993, p. 6

¹⁰⁹ Pavel Shinkarenko, 'Iraq: New Spire of Conflict', *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 19 January 1993, p. 1

¹¹⁰ Hearst, 'Attack on Iraq: Moscow Determined to Retain Command of Warship in Gulf', *The Guardian*, 19 January 1993, p. 8

¹¹¹ Martin Jurek, James Whittington, 'Allies Strike at Iraqi Radar: Missile Sites Hit...', *Financial Times*, 19 January 1993, p. 1

normalisation of the situation is in Baghdad', and that the 'solution lies in the complete realisation of the U.N. resolutions'. At the same time, the statement emphasised that the 'situation in Iraq has once again gone beyond the critical point' and that reaction to Iraq's actions should be 'adequate' and 'based only on concerted decisions'.¹¹²

The conservative newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* went further on the issue by quoting an unnamed high-ranking Russian diplomat as saying: 'We are sick and tired of a situation in which CNN reporters are notified of strikes against Saddam in advance, while Russian leaders are woken up in the middle of the night after an attack has already begun'.¹¹³ Emphasising that Russia's position went against its national interest, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, issued a memorandum to the Supreme Soviet, stating, *inter alia*, that Russia had lost US\$2.5 billion in arms sales and had suffered other economic losses as a result of the U.N. sanctions on Iraq.¹¹⁴

The frustration about what was perceived as Washington's disregard for Russia in an attempt to assume a role of enforcer in the region where Moscow had substantial interests,¹¹⁵ turned Iraq into a 'rallying point' of nationalists and communists, who yet again rejected co-operation with the West and the 'betrayal' of the long-standing Soviet ally.¹¹⁶ Moscow's official political support of the U.S. position with regard to Iraq, the inability of the Foreign Ministry to prevent the military actions against Baghdad that caused civilian deaths, but more

¹¹² Foreign Ministry Statement presented by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, 'Iraq: Reaction Should be Adequate', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 24 January 1993, p. 7

¹¹³ Dmitri Foydorov, 'The Times of Gendarmes Must Pass', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 23 January 1993, p. 7

¹¹⁴ Eggert, '16 Billion in Lost Economic Benefits: Experts Refute Minister's Opinion', *Izvestia*, p. 1

¹¹⁵ Glukhov, 'Lethal Fist of Goodness', *Pravda*, 21 January 1992, p. 5

¹¹⁶ Schmemmann, 'Raid on Iraq; Russia Urges the Security Council to Reconvene on the Iraqi Fighting', *New York Times*, 19 January 1993, p. 9

importantly, the fact that it was left in the dark concerning the forthcoming American air-strikes, provided the opposition with yet another opportunity to mobilise against the government, and in particular against the Foreign Ministry.

Voicing harsh criticism against Kozyrev's foreign policy approach, the Russian vice-president Alexander Rutskoi emphasised that the military solution would not lead to the resolution of the problem and argued that Russia ought to use its power of veto at the U.N. Security Council if the latter decided to launch new air-strikes against Iraq.¹¹⁷ The nationalist leader Sergei Baburin claimed that 'every attack on Iraq automatically undermines the international prestige of Western countries' and warned that 'even those who condemn Saddam and his regime understand perfectly well that tomorrow they may be treated in the same way'.¹¹⁸ Presenting Saddam Hussein as abandoned by the Russian government, Vladimir Zhirinovsky went as far as organising a trip for a group of fifteen of his supporters who volunteered to fly to Baghdad to fight alongside Iraqi soldiers against the American forces.¹¹⁹ According to Zhirinovsky, 'we are going to Iraq to whip up anti-American fervour and unite the Arab world against the U.S'.¹²⁰ As before, in an attempt to distance itself from Zhirinovsky's conduct, the Foreign Ministry issued a statement, emphasising that 'this action has nothing in common with Russia's Middle East policy, and was 'at odds with efforts to restore peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region.'¹²¹

¹¹⁷ ITAR-TASS, 'Russia Ought to Use the Power of Veto in UN Security Council', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 26 January 1993, p. 3

¹¹⁸ Higgins, 'Iraq under Fire: Russian 'Weakness' Attacked', *The Independent*, 19 January 1993, p. 12

¹¹⁹ Yusin, 'Zhirinovsky's Fighters Fly to Iraq to Engage in Terrorism', *Izvestia*, 25 January 1993, p. 1

¹²⁰ Jonathan Bastable, Matthew Campbell, 'Patriot Brigade Set to Fly Out to Aid the Iraqis', *The Sunday Times*, 24 January 1993, pp. 1, 12

¹²¹ ITAR-TASS, 'Russian Foreign Ministry Harshly Condemns Trip to Baghdad by Zhirinovsky's Fighters', *Izvestia*, 27 January 1993, p. 3

The parliamentary opposition also exercised pressure on the government concerning the fate of the Russian war ships in the Persian Gulf. Sergei Baburin argued that 'Russia's servicemen on these ships have become hostages' and urged Moscow 'not to share responsibility for flagrant tyranny' with the members of the anti-Iraq coalition.¹²² In spite of the statement by the commander of the Russian navy, Felix Gromov, that the Russian ships in the Gulf were under his command only and not subordinate to coalition forces,¹²³ the opposition raised demands to review the question of 'Russia's military presence' in the Gulf at one of the meetings of the Supreme Council,¹²⁴ and ultimately forced the government to withdraw the ships from the region all together.¹²⁵

Analysing the Foreign Ministry's position during this crisis, *Pravda* noted that the 'role of Washington yes-man is unbecoming of any country, especially Russia' and 'inevitably conflicts with national interests'.¹²⁶ Similarly, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* concluded that possibly the Foreign Ministry 'has finally begun to realise that Russia remains a great power and that such a power should have its own policy'.¹²⁷ *Moskovskie Novosti* observed that Russian economic and political circles were interested in re-establishing ties with Iraq, and expressed concern about the probability of Russia's return to its previously held positions in that country, because of the competition on the part of the Western firms and the altered relationship between Baghdad and Moscow. While the article agreed that Russia's present policy towards Iraq ought to be primarily determined by the goal

¹²² 'Russian Federation Supreme Soviet Fears Russia Will be Drawn Into Conflict, While Foreign Ministry Reaffirms Commitment to World Community', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 15 January 1993, p. 2

¹²³ Hearst, 'Attack on Iraq: Moscow Determined to Retain Command of Warship in Gulf', *The Guardian*, 19 January 1993, p. 8

¹²⁴ Shinkarenko, 'Iraq: New Spire of Conflict', *Rossiyskie Vesti*, p. 1

¹²⁵ Bastable, Campbell, *The Sunday Times*, 24 January 1993, p. 12

¹²⁶ Glukhov, 'Russia Tests Its Voice', *Pravda*, 27 January 1993, p. 1

¹²⁷ Foydorov, 'The Times of Gendarmes Must Pass', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, p. 7

of stability in the Persian Gulf, it also argued that Russia ought to keep in mind its economic interests in the country.¹²⁸

The growing domestic pressure, which had already put Kozyrev on the defensive over Russia's policy in the war in former Yugoslavia¹²⁹ and the signing of the strategic arms limitation treaty, START-II, on 3 January, that was described as a 'high-water mark' in Russia's pro-Western policy,¹³⁰ compelled Yeltsin to signal a shift in Russian foreign policy towards a more assertive approach. At a press conference in the Kremlin on 25 January, Yeltsin noted that 'there have been accusations that our Foreign Minister's orientation is pro-Western, that he is always looking left and cannot turn his head to the right', and declared that 'now our policy is more or less balanced.'¹³¹ In a statement concerning American policy towards Yugoslavia and Iraq, the Russian President, in an attempt to appease the opposition, observed that the U.S. had shown a tendency to dictate terms instead of engaging in dialogue.¹³² He admitted to have had a 'difference of opinion' over Yugoslavia and Iraq with Washington, and stated that 'there needs to be a political dialogue with Iraq and its government', adding that President Clinton appeared to him 'more inclined to carry out that sort of policy'.¹³³

The following day, Kozyrev was eager to reassure the West that Russia's position had not radically changed, and should not be viewed as an effort by Russia to distance itself from the U.S. by calling the latest disagreements with

¹²⁸ Vladimir Rass, 'Iraq: What's Next?', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 23 January 1993, p. 8

¹²⁹ Vladimir Abarinov, 'Which Side is it Easier to Take?', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 January 1993, p. 4

¹³⁰ 'Sweet and Sour Borsch/Russia's Foreign Policy and Asia', *The Economist*, 16 January 1993, p. 10

¹³¹ Schmemmann, 'Yeltsin Critical of U.S. Role in Balkans and Iraq', *New York Times*, 26 January 1993, p. 6

¹³² Glukhov, *Pravda*, 27 January 1993, p. 1; Schmemmann, 'Russian Sensitivities: As Choices Become Harder, Moscow Grows Sceptical About U.S. Policies', *New York Times*, 27 January 1993, p. 6

¹³³ Schmemmann, 'Yeltsin Critical of U.S. Role in Balkans and Iraq', *New York Times*, 26 January 1993, p. 6

Washington a 'mature partnership'.¹³⁴ However, it appeared that Yeltsin was indeed determined to underscore the independence of Russia's foreign policy in the hope of seizing the initiative from the opposition by reminding the West of Russia's national interests, and exercising pressure on newly elected American President Bill Clinton for more aid to Russia. It was probably for that purpose that at the end of January, the Russian President directed the Foreign Ministry to examine the prospect of resuming deliveries of the Iraqi oil to Russia, and in February 1993, dispatched the deputy director of Middle East Department at the Foreign Ministry, Igor Melikhov, to Baghdad.¹³⁵

Whereas the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations belittled the importance of the directive by promptly explaining that its was issued in the event that Baghdad complied with the U.N. resolutions and that sanctions were eased or lifted,¹³⁶ Melikhov's visit created controversy regarding the change in Moscow's position on Iraq.¹³⁷ This was further fuelled by the latter's statement that the objective of his trip was to 'strengthen and promote Russian-Iraqi ties.'¹³⁸ Even though Viktor Posuvalyuk, the Director of the Middle East Department at the Foreign Ministry claimed that his subordinate's comments were taken out of context and falsely interpreted by foreign journalists, he himself argued that Moscow could not ignore the 'potential for Russian-Iraqi co-operation'.¹³⁹ However, this move was not enough to appease the pro-Iraqi opposition. In April 1993, a right-wing delegation led by the former Deputy

¹³⁴ V.A., 'Kozyrev Isn't Afraid of Tiffs', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 27 January 1993, p. 1

¹³⁵ Eggert, 'What Happens After Saddam?', *Izvestia*, 28 January 1993, p. 4

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Shumilin, 'Russian Foreign Ministry's Baghdad Nights', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 February 1993, p. 4

¹³⁸ Yusin, 'Russian Diplomat Declares the Ambition to 'Strengthen Friendly Ties with Iraq'', *Izvestia*, 10 February 1993, p. 1, 3

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Defence Minister of the USSR, General Achalov, and a conservative Supreme Soviet deputy and parliament speaker, Ruslan Khasbulatov, travelled to Baghdad, where the former expressed dismay at the sanctions regime, and declared that it was not the Russian people, but the Soviet and Russian leadership who had betrayed Iraq.¹⁴⁰

Yeltsin's difficulty to maintain the balancing act between pacifying the opposition and continuing support for the West, and in particular Washington's tough stance towards Iraq, was illustrated at the end of June, when the U.S. fired twenty-three Tomahawk missiles into Iraq's intelligence quarters in Baghdad in retaliation for a plot to assassinate President Bush during his trip to Kuwait on 15 April.¹⁴¹ This time, the Russian leadership was informed in advance about the planned air-strike and was provided with 'exhaustive' evidence of Iraqi special services' involvement in the plot.¹⁴² Consequently, the Foreign Ministry in its statement published on 27 June, expressed understanding of the American action, but refrained from articulating open support for Washington's air-strike to prevent attacks by the opposition.¹⁴³ Similarly, President Yeltsin, on a visit to Athens at the time, when asked by a Greek journalist as to why Russia supported the American attack on Iraq, responded that the Russian statement did not contain the word 'support', advising the journalist to study carefully the text.¹⁴⁴

However, while eager to avoid another confrontation with the opposition, Yeltsin needed to express support for the American actions to ease the latest tensions over Russia's stance on Bosnia and the sale of rocket engines to India in

¹⁴⁰ Shumilin, 'Hand Extended to Saddam Hussein Again', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 16 April 1993, p. 4

¹⁴¹ For detailed account, Bill Clinton, *My Life*, (London: Arrow Books, 2005), pp. 525-526

¹⁴² Abarinov, 'Moscow is Convinced Washington was Right', *Segodnya*, 6 July 1993, p. 3

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

the hope for Clinton's support at the forthcoming Tokyo G-7 Summit, which exercised considerable influence over policies of the IMF and the World Bank.¹⁴⁵ He might also have wanted to re-pay the Americans for their 'understanding' stance with regard to the presence of Russian troops in the Near Abroad. Their status under international law had yet to be clarified, and Moscow was anxious to keep the matter away from the U.N. Security Council.¹⁴⁶

Yeltsin therefore left it to Kozyrev to articulate Moscow's approval of the U.S. retaliation, following his tactic adopted early in his Presidency, namely to use Kozyrev as his port-parole towards the West, while domestically distancing himself from the Foreign Minister's much criticised pro-Western policy. This left Kozyrev 'feeling lonely' in the Russian government as an 'advocate of co-operation with the U.S.'.¹⁴⁷ The Russian Foreign Minister at a press conference held at the conclusion of talks between the foreign ministers of Russia and Luxembourg, therefore publicly backed Washington's military retaliation, pointing out that 'we cannot consider hunting presidents, even former ones, to be normal. Tolerating this would be tantamount to endorsing a policy of state terrorism.'¹⁴⁸

As expected, the parliamentary opposition denounced the attack and the position taken by the Foreign Ministry. At the meeting of the Supreme Soviet, Deputy Iona Andronov declared that 'the world must know that not everyone in Russia condones the murder of unfortunate Iraqis. Russia has another voice – the

¹⁴⁵ Kondrashev, 'Blurred Effect of Missile Pedagogy', *Izvestia*, 30 June 1993, p. 3

¹⁴⁶ Abarinov, *Segodnya*, 6 July 1993, p. 3

¹⁴⁷ As Kozyrev expressed it in private meetings with Clinton's Ambassador-at Large and Special Advisor to the Secretary of State on the New Independent States, Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*, (Random House: New York, 2002), p. 59

¹⁴⁸ Quoted by Eggert, Yusin, 'We Can't Consider Hunting Presidents to Be Normal', *Izvestia*, 29 June 1993, p. 1

Supreme Soviet – and it has real people’.¹⁴⁹ The Supreme Soviet lodged an official protest against the ‘act of international violence committed by the U.S.’, with the Council of the Republic and the Council of Nationalities voting for the document, which the Foreign Minister was subsequently instructed to distribute at the U.N. as an official document.¹⁵⁰

Commenting on the American attack and the position of the Russian leadership, the Russian press offered a largely negative assessment. *Pravda* stated: ‘Even those who have no love for Saddam Hussein’s regime are shaken by the missile strike on Baghdad’. It described the attack as a ‘serious precedent’ and argued that henceforth any country suspected of terrorism could become a target of U.S. attacks. In its view, Russia’s support for the strike on the basis of Article 51 of the U.N. Charter was an ‘incredible cynism’, as it ‘unties Washington’s hands to carry out any armed action anywhere on the planet’.¹⁵¹ An *Izvestia* commentator, while acknowledging that the U.S. had the ‘right to self-defence’, concluded that ‘our multipolar and interdependent world can scarcely afford to give any state a totally unlimited right to act as supreme arbiter and ultimate truth-bearer’.¹⁵² Another *Izvestia* commentator complained that the Russian leadership was ‘too quick and too unconditional’ in the support of the American action, ‘totally glossing over timid qualifications about the need to avoid escalating violence’.¹⁵³

However, soon the domestic developments greatly diminished the influence of Yeltsin’s pro-Iraqi opponents on Moscow’s foreign policy. On 12

¹⁴⁹ N. Garifullina, ‘Protest by Russian Parliament’, *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 1 July 1993, p. 1

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Filatov, ‘Instead of International Law – Law of Brute Force’, *Pravda*, 29 June 1993, p. 3

¹⁵² Vladimir Mikheyev, ‘Principle of Reasonable Sufficiency Squares Poorly with Retaliatory Strike on Baghdad’, *Izvestia*, 29 June 1993, p. 3

¹⁵³ Kondrashev, ‘Blurred Effect of Missile Pedagogy’, *Izvestia*, p. 3

August, the Russian President at a Conference in the House of Russian Press noted that the previous months 'have been marked by another high point of political tension,' as the parliamentary opposition purposefully impeded the work of the government and stepped up personal attacks on the President, playing up the subject of Yeltsin's health, and announced parliamentary elections to be held in autumn.¹⁵⁴ Subsequently, faced with intensified struggle with the parliament, which essentially 'deprived the executive branch of the opportunity to function and to exercise its constitutional powers',¹⁵⁵ Yeltsin in a televised address to the nation on 21 September, announced the dissolution of the parliament and the establishment of a new supreme legislative body – the Federal Assembly, to be elected on 12 December, followed by early elections for the President.¹⁵⁶ In response, the opposition on 3 October unsuccessfully mounted armed attacks on the Russian White House and Ostankino Television Centre in an attempt to remove Yeltsin from power.¹⁵⁷

Yeltsin's victory over his opponents was reflected in Moscow's temporary distancing from Baghdad in favour of increasing co-operation with the wealthy states of the Gulf. By the end of November, during a visit of Kuwait's Defence Minister Ali Sabah al-Salim to Moscow, Russia and Kuwait signed a ten-year agreement on military co-operation, which provided for conducting joint naval manoeuvres, exchanging military delegations and the Kuwaiti purchase of Russian military equipment 'in accordance with the needs of the Emirate'.¹⁵⁸ In a

¹⁵⁴ Yeltsin, 'We'll Make it Until Autumn. Then We'll See What's Left on the Branches of Government', *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 13 August 1993, p. 1

¹⁵⁵ Yuri Orlik, 'What We Can Expect from the Russian President's September Offensive', *Izvestia*, 10 September 1993, pp. 1, 4

¹⁵⁶ Decree of the President of Russian Federation, *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 22 September 1993, p. 1

¹⁵⁷ 'Tragic Events in Moscow. Battle for the White House', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 October 1993, p. 1

¹⁵⁸ 'Russia and Kuwait Conclude Military Co-operation Agreement', *Izvestia*, 1 December 1993, p. 3

clear reference to Iraq that still refused to recognise Kuwait's independence and the newly redrawn Iraq-Kuwait border, the document called for Russia's assistance in the 'elimination of the threat to sovereignty, security and territorial integrity and repelling aggression'.¹⁵⁹

Later, commenting on the treaty, *Rossiyskie Vesti* observed that the Middle East 'constitutes a certain interest' for Russia, from the point of view of replenishing its hard currency resources, and 'even more so, since it appears that we are not going to obtain tangible assistance from the West'.¹⁶⁰ The same month, Russian Vice-Premier Alexander Shokhin travelled to the United Arab Emirates for the opening of the international arms exhibition, where he declared that his visit took place in the context of Russia's pragmatic foreign policy aimed at creating favourable conditions for increasing Russian exports.¹⁶¹

The low point in Russian-Iraqi relations was reached in late December, when Russia and Kuwait conducted joint naval manoeuvres as set out in the co-operation agreement. This prompted *Pravda* to complain that 'the door to co-operation with Iraq – a rich and influential state with which we used to have very close ties – has thereby been slammed shut'.¹⁶² However, *Pravda's* prediction did not materialise. By the spring of 1994, Moscow in its pursuit of a more assertive and pragmatic foreign policy, reactivated its contacts with Baghdad, and stepped up its diplomatic efforts in the United Nations, determined to obtain the lifting of sanctions against Iraq.

¹⁵⁹ 'Russia-Kuwait Co-operation Agreement', *Kommersant*, 1 December 1993, p. 6

¹⁶⁰ Mustafin, 'Arab East: Compass of Security', *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 30 December 1993, p. 3

¹⁶¹ ITAR-TASS, 'Shikhin in United Arab Emirates', *Pravda*, 28 November 1993, p. 4; ITAR-TASS, 'Towards a More Pragmatic Foreign Policy', 29 November 1993, p. 4

¹⁶² Belyakov, 'All Eggs in One Basket', *Pravda*, 11 January 1994, p. 3

Chapter 3: Russia at the U.N. Security Council during the 1994 Iraq Crisis

The difference between the Russian and American positions is simple: Washington thinks that Hussein's unreliability precludes anything other than an extremely tough approach to him. We, on the other hand, think that pressure on Baghdad will be more effective if it is stated publicly that there have been changes for the better, but such-and-such demands will have to be met in order for such-and-such restrictions to be relaxed. In relations with a country, one should proceed from a presumption of good, not evil.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Boris Kolokolov¹

The new constellation of forces in the Russian domestic arena and growing disillusionment with the West substantially had transformed Moscow's approach to its traditional Soviet-time ally in the Middle East by 1994. The new dynamics in Russia's policy towards Baghdad became apparent at the United Nations Security Council, where Moscow stepped up efforts to have sanctions against Iraq lifted. At the same time, it became noticeable in Russia's increased bilateral contacts with Baghdad, aimed at securing the repayment of Iraqi debts and advantageously positioning Russia in that country in preparation for the post-embargo period.

In mid-January 1994, Iraq, following its acceptance of U.N. Resolution 715 in November 1993,² which approved plans for monitoring the Iraqi compliance with its obligations under the cease-fire agreement,³ submitted to the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) its first declarations on past

¹ Quoted by Konstantin Eggert, 'Russian Foreign Ministry Proposes that Saddam Hussein be Considered a Good Man', *Izvestia*, 9 August 1994, p. 3

² Communication of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq to the President of the U.N. Security Council, 26 November 1993, United Nations Document S/26811

³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 715, S/RES/715 (1991)

proscribed chemical, biological weapons and ballistic missiles, as well as on its current dual-purpose capabilities in those areas.⁴ In March 1994, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) completed the removal of all direct weapons-usable materials from Iraq, and in its April report to the Security Council declared Iraq's report, submitted by the end of March, as acceptable to its established reporting standards.⁵ Between February and November, high-level talks were held between Iraq on one side, and UNSCOM and the IAEA on the other, aimed at facilitating the latter's recognition that Baghdad had taken all actions called for in paragraph 22 of Resolution 687.⁶ A joint statement issued after the talks in Baghdad on 2-5 February, indicated that the two sides had consolidated a breakthrough in relations between Iraq and UNSCOM. It also reviewed the steps to put in place an Ongoing Monitoring and Verification (OMV) plans, undertaken since Iraq's acceptance of the resolution 715 in 1993, and expressed a readiness to expedite that process in a spirit of goodwill to achieve their shared objective – the lifting of sanctions against Iraq.⁷

During the subsequent talks between the Executive Chairman of UNSCOM, Rolf Ekeus, and Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, Tareq Aziz, in New York in March 1994, the latter repeatedly stated Iraq's view that it had completed all actions demanded of it under paragraph 22 of Resolution 687. He urged UNSCOM and the IAEA to report to the Security Council that the conditions for

⁴ Report of the Executive Chairman of UNSCOM to the U.N. Security Council, 19 March 1994, United Nations Document, S/1994/341

⁵ Report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the U.N. Security Council, United Nations Document, S/1994/490

⁶ Paragraph 22 established that the destruction of Iraqi weapons arsenal was to lead to the lifting of sanctions.

⁷ Joint Statement of the Republic of Iraq, UNSCOM and the IAEA, 5 February 1994, United Nations Document S/1994/151; Paul Lewis, 'U.N. Speeds Arms-Monitoring Efforts in Iraq', *New York Times*, 13 February 1994, p. 6

the lifting of the embargo had been met.⁸ At the same time, Aziz stressed that Iraq could not trust UNSCOM to act objectively in pursuit of its mandate, as no such report had yet been made and no date set for it, and warned of serious consequences. However, Ekeus continued to insist that such a report required UNSCOM to possess full information on Iraq's prohibited weapons programmes. This was required for their definite accounting and the establishment of an effective OMV system that could be implemented in such a way as to preclude the clandestine re-activation of prohibited programmes.⁹

Baghdad's hitherto unprecedented co-operation with the United Nations, and the significant steps reached in disarming Iraq by UNSCOM and the IAEA, provided Moscow with a long-awaited opportunity to modify its stance at the Security Council towards openly advocating the lifting of sanctions against Iraq. Russian officials emphasised that Russia's position with regard to the Iraqi question was based on the primacy of international law, meaning that Baghdad was required to implement the decisions that had been collectively adopted by the international community. At the same time, they stressed that over the previous three years Iraq had done much in meeting U.N. demands, particularly in the disarmament field, requiring the U.N. to react to these positive changes.¹⁰

In line with this approach, on the eve of the routine review of the sanctions regime against Iraq at the Security Council on 16 March 1994, a senior Russian diplomat expressed dissatisfaction with the Western position, and argued that the embargo should be lifted. However, he also admitted that Moscow wanted a

⁸ Report of the Executive Chairman of UNSCOM to the U.N. Security Council, 19 March 1994, United Nations Document, S/1994/341; Also interview with Tareq Aziz on 19 March 1994, Daniel Pipes, 'The View from Baghdad: Tareq Aziz', *The Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 1994, available online at: <http://www.meforum.org/article/225>, viewed on 2 September 2005

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Irina Grudinina, 'Russian Foreign Ministry Insists on Easing Sanctions Against Iraq', *Segodnya*, 29 April 1994, p. 3

‘positive decision on this question to allow us to begin recovering the Iraqi debts’.¹¹ In Moscow’s view, it was necessary to move to the next stage, the launch of a mechanism for the long-term monitoring of Iraqi military programmes, whilst rewarding Iraq for the constructive changes it had already undertaken.¹²

Consequently, when the Executive Chairman of UNSCOM, during the talks with the head of the Iraqi military-industrial complex, Amer Rashid, emphasised the need for a six months full compliance with the U.N. resolutions before he could recommend the lifting of sanctions, Moscow was eager to fix the time-frame for this period and secure a commitment on the part of the Security Council members that it would end unconditionally following that date.¹³ Later, in an interview with an *Interfax* correspondent, a Russian foreign ministry official explained that Moscow was worried that the continuing vagueness about the prospect of the lifting of sanctions, as well as the ‘language of threats and methods of forcible pressure’, could be ‘counterproductive’, as it could return Iraq to the position of ‘blind defence’ and lead to confrontation with the United Nations.¹⁴

Moscow continued to maintain this position at the subsequent review of the sanctions regime against Iraq on 17 May, this time supported by more than half of the 15 Security Council members who were ready to acknowledge that Baghdad was making progress towards meeting conditions for the lifting of the ban on its sale of oil.¹⁵

Whereas there was a consensus that Iraq had not yet complied with all disarmament terms as required of it, the Council was divided over the issue of a

¹¹ Ian Black, ‘Russia Urges End to Iraqi Sanctions’, *The Guardian*, 16 March 1994, p. 11

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Irina Grudinina, *Segodnya*, 29 April 1994, p. 3

¹⁵ Paul Lewis, ‘U.N. Council Split on Iraq’, *New York Times*, 18 May 1994, p. 10

statement recognising Saddam Hussein's progress towards complying with the U.N. demands, aimed at encouraging his full compliance. As expected, the Russian representative strongly advocated the publishing of such a statement, arguing that Saddam Hussein needed 'encouraging gestures from the international community'.¹⁶

Similarly, when during the subsequent sanctions review at the Security Council on 19 July 1994, progress had been noted in the discovery and liquidation of the Iraqi weapons and weapons programmes, as well as in the establishment of a long-term monitoring system, Russia once more proposed that the Council react adequately to these positive changes. In commenting on his government's position, the Russian representative at the U.N., Sergei Lavrov, admitted that Moscow's view was influenced by 'our large economic and financial interests', but promised that 'we do not intend to advance our interests through breach of international law, but acting strictly within the framework of the Security Council resolutions and fixed procedures'.¹⁷ According to Lavrov, Russia considered it necessary for Iraq to fulfil all other demands, including the recognition of Kuwait and clarification of the fate of the missing Kuwaiti prisoners. However, in a clear reference to the U.S. position, the Russian representative noted that 'we are against the revision of U.N. resolutions *ex post facto* and against imposing conditions contradicting the adopted decisions.'¹⁸

Commenting on Moscow's policy at the U.N., a Russian commentator in *Moskovskie Novosti* argued that it was not surprising that the Iraqi lobby relied on

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Russian representative at the U.N., Sergei Lavrov, 'It Is Time to Ease the Sanctions Against Iraq', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 24-31 July 1994, p. 5

¹⁸ Ibid.

Russia, 'as Moscow has always been regarded as a weak link in the coalition'.¹⁹ In another article, concerned with the consequences for Russia's prestige in the Middle East and the world at large, he also deplored the fact that Russia 'is a kind of 'lobbyist' of Iraq in the Security Council'.²⁰

However, Russia was not alone in desiring to bring an end to the sanctions regime. Although bitterly opposed by the U.S. and Britain, this position found enthusiastic support by France and China, creating a lasting split in the anti-Iraq coalition that was to continue until the U.S.-led war against Iraq in 2003.

Like Russia, France expected the U.S. to set definite criteria for what Iraq had to do to obtain the lifting of sanctions.²¹ The French Foreign Minister, Alain Juppé, like his Russian counterpart, insisted that Iraq was co-operating with the United Nations, and that the Security Council 'must in return make a positive step toward the softening of sanctions against Iraq in keeping with a fair and legalistic interpretation with the Council's resolutions'.²² Similar to Moscow, Paris was eager to obtain the end of the embargo against Baghdad, its most important economic partner in the Middle East, in order to recover Iraqi debt repayments amounting to US\$5.5 billion and to secure re-entry into Iraq's lucrative market that Baghdad was promising in return for the French voice of support in the Security Council.²³ It was certainly for that reason that already in spring 1992 Iraq had contacted the largest French state-controlled companies *Elf Aquitaine* and *Total* to negotiate potential exploration and production sharing agreements of the

¹⁹ Alexander Shumilin, 'Baghdad Seeking a Breach in the Anti-Iraq Coalition', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 27 March-3 April 1994, p. 12

²⁰ Shumilin, 'Russian Carrot or American Stick?', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 32 July-7 August 1994, p. 12

²¹ 'How to Get the Sanctions Lifted', *The Guardian*, 12 October 1994, p. 14

²² Alan Riding, 'French Talk to Iraqis, Angering Allies', *New York Times*, 7 January 1995, p. 6

²³ Ibid.

two large oil and gas reserves north of Basra near the Iranian border.²⁴ Even though both companies emphasised that they would not sign any agreements until the sanctions were lifted, the Iraqi vice-president Taha Yassin Ramadan, in an attempt to exercise pressure on the French government, declared that the oil production would re-start in the near future, and would not necessarily await a U.N. decision.²⁵

In addition, the French position at the United Nations corresponded to its desire to re-build the country's influence in the Middle East, considerably weakened since the Gulf War in 1991. Already in 1992, President François Mitterrand launched a political initiative in an attempt to re-gain France's lost influence in the region by visiting Jordan, and for the first time since 1982, Israel,²⁶ as well as by playing a more active role in the economic realm of the Arab-Israeli peace talks.²⁷ In 1994, France also attempted to bring Iraq into the peace process in order to gain support from Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco to counter pressure from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia on Washington to block the lifting of sanctions.²⁸ However, despite a flurry of activities by the former French Minister of Defence Jean-Pierre Chevenement, a handshake by Aziz's aide with two Israeli delegates at the United Nations in New York in March 1994, and a message from the Baath Party that it approved direct contacts with Israel since the Palestinians had opted for peace, the French efforts remained unsuccessful.²⁹

²⁴ William Dawkins, 'Commodities and Agriculture: Elf and Total Resume Iraq Oil Exploration Discussions', *Financial Times*, 5 March 1992, p. 30

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jean-Pierre Langellier, 'M. Mitterrand veut renforcer l'amitié franco-israélienne', *Le Monde*, 25 November 1992, p. 1

²⁷ Dawkins, 'Mitterrand to Rebuild Mideast Relations', *Financial Times*, 25 November 1992, p. 4

²⁸ Adel Darwish, 'French Broker Deal Between Saddam and Israel', *The Independent*, 6 December 1994, p. 12

²⁹ Marie Colvin, 'France Breaks Ranks on Iraq', *Sunday Times*, 8 January 1995, p. 16

The French government had also maintained direct contact with Baghdad by initially arranging meetings with Iraqi officials outside France, and by using the services of the former government officials acquainted with Saddam Hussein during the golden age of French-Iraqi relations in the 1980s. In spring 1994, the French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua held talks with Aziz in Germany.³⁰ In December 1994, the former French foreign minister Claude Cheysson travelled to Baghdad, where, at a meeting with Saddam Hussein, he discussed steps to bring about the lifting of sanctions, arguing that isolating Iraq 'represents a danger to peace' and 'gives a chance to fanatics in other parts of the world'.³¹

At the same time, marking a departure from cautious contact with Iraqi officials abroad, a member of the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, Ridyad al-Qaisi, was received in Paris, where he held talks with French Foreign Ministry officials, and reached an agreement 'to continue to work at the Security Council in line with a co-ordinated plan with specific steps'.³² More importantly, indicating the growing French belief that the lifting of sanctions was in view, the French foreign minister Alain Juppé, following talks with Tareq Aziz in Paris on 6 January 1995, announced the restoration of diplomatic link with Iraq by opening a French interest section in the Rumanian embassy in Baghdad.³³

China also supported the Russian position at the U.N. Security Council motivated primarily by economic considerations.³⁴ By 1978, domestic modernisation in China had begun to alter the nature of the country's involvement in the Middle

³⁰ Shumilin, *Moskovskie Novosti*, 31 July-7 August 1994, p. 12

³¹ Reuters, 'Call to Lift U.N. Sanctions on Iraq', *The Guardian*, 19 December 1994, p. 8

³² Baghdad Newspapers quoting the Iraqi News Agency, as reported by Reuters, 'Call to Lift U.N. Sanctions on Iraq', *The Guardian*, 19 December 1994, p. 8

³³ Colvin, *Sunday Times*, 8 January 1995, pp. 1, 16

³⁴ On China's policy towards Iraq and the Gulf states, see John Calabrese, 'China and the Persian Gulf', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 3, Summer 1998, pp. 351-366

East, and by 1992, the region became Beijing's fourth largest trading partner.³⁵ Subsequently, the sharp rise in domestic demand for oil, and more importantly, the fact that since 1993 China moved from being a net oil exporter to being an oil importer,³⁶ turned the Middle East into an area of special strategic importance to the Chinese government.

At the same time, the demands of modernisation had created a continuing dilemma in Chinese foreign policy. On one hand, Beijing was interested in ending its isolation and re-building its political and economic relations with the West, particularly the U.S., which had been on ice as a consequence of the Tiananmen Square incident in June 1989.³⁷ On the other hand, it was ambitious to limit American influence in the Middle East. Therefore China, while advocating a peaceful resolution of the Gulf crisis in 1990 'within the scope of the Arab countries',³⁸ supported the U.S.-sponsored U.N. resolutions, including the imposition of sanctions, but abstained on Resolution 678 that allowed for the use of force against Iraq.³⁹

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, Beijing continued to support the Western tough line towards Baghdad at the Security Council 'in order to promote regional peace and stability in the region'.⁴⁰ At the same time, it was interested in the lifting of sanctions to resume its trade ties with Iraq and prevent Washington from

³⁵ Yitzhak Shichor, 'Small Cracks in the Great Wall: The Prospects for Sino-Israeli Relations', *Research Report* n. 5, Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1987, as quoted by Jonathan Rynhold, 'China's New Pragmatism in the Middle East', *Survival*, Vol. 38, No 3, Autumn 1996, p. 102

³⁶ On China's energy policy, see Calabrese, 'Dragon by the Tail: China's Energy Quandary', Paper for the Middle East Institute, available online at <http://www.mideasti.org/pdfs/calabrese304.pdf>, viewed on 10 September 2005

³⁷ Thomas L. Friedman, 'U.S. Suspends High-Level Links to China as Crackdown Goes On', *New York Times*, 21 June 1989, p. 1

³⁸ Shichor, 'China and the Gulf Crisis', *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 40, No. 6, November-December 1991, p. 90

³⁹ Lillian Craig Harris, 'The Gulf Crisis and China's Middle East Dilemma' *Pacific Review*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Winter 1991, pp. 116-125

⁴⁰ Summary of World Broadcasts, SWB-FE/2124/G, 14 November 1994, SWB-FE/2177/G, 13 December 1994

strengthening its hegemonic position in the region. This strategy was expressed by President Jiang Zemin in his speech to Chinese envoys in 1994, in which he argued that China ought to oppose 'hegemony' and 'link up' with 'allies', such as Iran, while emphasising that Beijing's top priority was the consolidation of a peaceful international environment, favourable to economic reconstruction.⁴¹

Even though Chinese officials had called on Baghdad to comply with the U.N. demands, they also voiced strong reservations about many measures adopted by the Security Council, and objected the punitive strikes against Iraq. On a rhetorical level, China emphasised the dramatic impact of the sanctions on the Iraqi population and economy and advocated the removal of the embargo regime at the earliest possible date 'on the basis of human considerations'.⁴²

In return for Chinese support in the Security Council, Iraq, as in case of Russia and France, offered China favourable contracts for the development of its oil industry. In June 1997, the *Chinese National Petroleum Corporation* (CNPC) and the state-owned *Norinco* signed an agreement with Baghdad for the development of the Al-Ahdab oil-field in central Iraq, forming a new company, *al-Waha* for the development of the field. A year later, CNPC negotiated a contract for the exploration of the Halfayah field, the biggest overseas development project for this Chinese oil company.⁴³ However, in spite of the economic incentive on the Iraqi part, China, in line with its general approach not to take a leading role in the international affairs,⁴⁴ was reluctant to act

⁴¹ Deng-Ker Lee, 'Peking's Middle East Policy in the Post-Cold War Era', *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 8, August 1994, p. 85

⁴² Statement of Li Zhaoxing, Chinese representative at the Security Council on 14 April 1995, U.N. Document, Security Council, S/PV.35.19

⁴³ Xiaojie Xu, 'China and the Middle East: Cross-investment in the Energy Sector', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. VII, No. 3, June 2000, p. 130

⁴⁴ Gerald Segal, 'Tying China into the International System', *Survival*, Vol. 37, No. 2, Summer 1995, p. 72

independently at the Security Council, and avoided openly challenging Washington on the issue, instead preferring to join ranks with France and Russia.⁴⁵

The American position with regard to Iraq, supported by Britain, was diametrically opposed to that of Russia, China and France.⁴⁶ On 21 January 1993, the newly elected President Bill Clinton pledged to adhere to the policy towards Iraq set down by the Bush Administration.⁴⁷ The American strategy was aimed at weakening the Iraqi regime internally through economic sanctions and international inspections, making Saddam Hussein vulnerable to overthrow.⁴⁸ As a consequence, Washington continuously blocked all attempts at the Security Council to lift the sanctions, arguing that the Saddam Hussein regime continued to defy the terms of the Gulf War peace and failed to comply with the U.N. Security Council resolutions.⁴⁹

In his report to the Congress on 6 June 1994, President Clinton emphasised that 'four years after the invasion [of Kuwait] a pattern of defiance persists', and accused the Iraqi regime of the 'sponsorship of assassinations in Lebanon and northern Iraq, incomplete declarations to weapons inspectors and ongoing and wide-spread human rights violations'. He concluded that as a consequence, 'the United States will continue to enforce those sanctions'.⁵⁰ To secure support for this policy, the American representative at the U.N., Madeleine

⁴⁵ Rynhold, *Survival*, Autumn 1996, p. 104

⁴⁶ On the division in the U.N. Security Council, analysis by Claude Lorieux, 'Irak: les 'libérateurs' du Koweït divisés', *Le Figaro*, 12 November 1994, p. 4

⁴⁷ Friedman, 'The Inauguration: Clinton Takes Oath as 42nd President, Urging Sacrifice to 'Renew America'', *New York Times*, 21 January 1993, p. 1

⁴⁸ John M. Goshko, 'Saddam May Force Saddam to Bend on Oil Sales', *International Herald Tribune*, 18 January 1994, p. 2

⁴⁹ On U.S. policy towards Iraq, Kenneth Katzman, 'Iraq: Compliance, Sanctions and U.S. Policy', *Congressional Research Service (CRS) Brief for Congress*, updated 2 January 2002, available online at: fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/7975.pdf, viewed on 2 September 2005

⁵⁰ Richards, 'Clinton Leads Call to Keep Iraq Sanctions', *The Independent*, 4 August 1994, p. 13

Albright, repeatedly argued that Iraq ‘has sought to evade, ignore and negotiate away its obligations’,⁵¹ and periodically presented the Security Council with evidence of the Iraqi defiant position towards the U.N. and Saddam Hussein’s lavish life-style at the expense of the Iraqi population.⁵²

Despite the noticeable progress in Baghdad’s compliance with the U.N. resolutions and UNSCOM in 1994, the United States remained suspicious of Iraq’s motives and advocated full compliance with all U.N. resolutions – and not only provisions related to disarmament and recognition of Kuwait, before considering the lifting of sanctions.⁵³

This difference of view on the matter among Security Council members was complicated by the conflicting wording of the two key sections of Resolution 687. Paragraph 20 specified the conditions on which Iraq could import goods from the outside world, and determined that the Security Council was ‘to review the provisions of paragraph 20 every 60 days in the light of the policies and practices of the government of Iraq, including the implementation of all relevant resolutions of the Council, for the purpose of determining whether to reduce or lift the prohibitions referred to therein’. However, paragraph 22 established a somewhat different set of rules for the lifting of sanctions by determining that ‘upon...Council agreement that Iraq has completed all actions contemplated in paragraph 8 to 13 [destruction of its weapons arsenal], the prohibitions against the

⁵¹ Barbara Crossette, ‘Threats in the Gulf: the U.N.; Iraqi Attempts to Have Sanctions Lifted Quickly May Have Backfired’, *New York Times*, 11 October 1994, p. 13

⁵² Richard Lyons, ‘U.N. Council Decides to Keep Economic Sanctions on Iraq’, *New York Times*, 15 November 1994, p. 6; Editorial, ‘Too Soon to Lift Iraq Sanctions’, *New York Times*, 14 January 1995, p. 22; Elaine Sciolino, ‘U.S. Says It’s Won U.N. Votes to Keep Sanctions on Iraq’, *New York Times*, 5 March 1995, p. 1

⁵³ Secretary of State Warren Christopher in a televised interview, quoted by Paul F. Horvitz, ‘U.S. Message to Iraq: Move Troops or Else’, *International Herald Tribune*, 17 October 1994, p. 1

import of commodities and products originating in Iraq...shall have no further force or effect'.⁵⁴

Russia and France regarded paragraph 22 as the crucial one, and insisted that Iraq had directly complied with the U.N. demands to destroy its weapons of mass destruction and that therefore the embargo should be lifted. The U.S. interpreted the resolution as meaning that Iraq had to comply with Resolution 688, which dealt with his treatment of the Shiites and the Kurds, before the sanctions could be ended. Britain supported the American position towards Iraq,⁵⁵ and regarded Saddam Hussein as 'untrustworthy', the Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd explaining that 'the leopard does not change his spots'.⁵⁶

However, while both, the U.S. and, to a certain extent, Russia, too, regarded Saddam Hussein as unreliable, there was a fundamental difference in their positions. For Washington, the unreliability of the Iraqi leader precluded dealing with Iraq as long as Saddam Hussein was in power,⁵⁷ whereas Moscow believed in the necessity of maintaining the dialogue with Iraq in the belief that the Iraqi leader as a pragmatic politician would change if pressurised by the international community. In an interview with *Izvestia*, the deputy foreign minister Boris Kolokolov argued that it was 'naïve' to think that Saddam Hussein could be removed. In his view, the Iraqi leader was a 'flesh-and blood politician',

⁵⁴ United Nations Security Council Resolution 687, S/RES/687, 3 April 1991

⁵⁵ Michael Evans, 'Sanctions Must Stay Foreign Office Says', *The Times*, 11 November 1994, p. 13

⁵⁶ Michael Sheridan, 'Britain and U.S. Insist on Iraq Sanctions', *The Independent*, 25 February 1995, p. 10

⁵⁷ On U.S. strategy towards Iraq, in particular the failed attempts to overthrow Saddam Hussein, Larry Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire: Iraq and the U.S. Global Agenda*, (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2004), pp. 197- 204

and even if his behaviour did 'not conform to the generally accepted standards, if he takes positive steps, why not say so publicly?,'⁵⁸

Similarly, the Russian foreign minister, arguing that he was not 'an idealist', 'a romantic', but 'a pragmatist' and 'a politician', stressed that he wanted to 'do everything that depends on us to make sure Saddam holds his word.'⁵⁹ In his opinion, the main problem of the American policy towards Iraq was the 'everything or nothing' approach and the 'creation of constant stereotypes like 'Saddam Hussein is bad'.⁶⁰ In his address in Low Rotunda, Kozyrev also argued that given its economic requirements, Russia had to take a different diplomatic track from the U.S. In his opinion, it was essential that Moscow did not rule out the prospect that Saddam Hussein would 'soften' his extremism – 'How do you engage Saddam in something positive is a challenge. This is a long road'.⁶¹

The essential difference in Russian and American approaches towards Baghdad and the extent of the deep division on the Iraqi question in the U.N. Security Council was highlighted by the Iraq crisis of autumn 1994. On 6 October, Iraq issued a statement at the close of the meeting of the Revolutionary Command Council and the Central Committee of the Baath Party, which asserted that the U.S. with the assistance of UNSCOM Executive Chairman and the collaboration of others, in particular Kuwait, was determined to prolong the sanctions against Iraq to kill large numbers of Iraqis through a policy of starvation

⁵⁸ Eggert, 'Russian Foreign Ministry Proposes that Saddam Hussein be Considered a Good Man', *Izvestia*, 9 August 1994, p. 3

⁵⁹ Mikhail Karpov, 'Moscow Needs a Stable Peace, Washington a Small Victorious War', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 12 November 1994, p. 1

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ 'Kozyrev Urges a New Partnership', *Columbia University Record*, 28 October 1994, Vol. 20, No. 8, available online at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/record/archives/vol20/vol_20iss8/record2008.15.html, viewed on 11 April 2005

and deprivation.⁶² It concluded that this left Iraq no alternative, but to consider a new stand that would restore justice and relief the Iraqi people from the distress imposed on it. A day later, two divisions of the Iraqi Republican Guard entered the southern areas of Iraq in proximity to the demilitarised zone on the border with Kuwait. While they united with three other divisions stationed in the area, substantial parts of the Iraqi army were moved to the Kuwait border from the Iranian frontier.⁶³

Whereas Baghdad declared the movement of troops to be a 'planned military exercise', arguing that 'Iraq is a sovereign state and has the right to move its troops on its own territory without limitations',⁶⁴ it was widely perceived either as the latter's determination to once again threaten Kuwait, or an attempt to demonstrate force in order to achieve the lifting of sanctions.⁶⁵ Whatever the reason, the U.S., supported by Britain and Kuwait, was determined to rebuff the renewed Iraqi aggression by military means if required.⁶⁶ Washington therefore rapidly dispatched 36,000 troops, fighter planes and an aircraft carrier battle group to Kuwait. Britain and France decided to increase their military forces in the Gulf, while Kuwait moved most of its army to the frontier with Iraq.⁶⁷

At the request of the U.S., an urgent Security Council meeting was convened on 8 October. The Council members warned Iraq against a renewed

⁶² The broadcast on *Radio Baghdad* reported by Reuters, 'Iraq Demands End to Economic Boycott', *International Herald Tribune*, 7 October 1994, p. 7

⁶³ Shumilin, 'Iraq: Repetition of the Past', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 9-16 October 1994, p. 13

⁶⁴ Statement of the Iraqi government, reported by Iraq News Agency on 10 October 1994, United Nations Document, S1994/1149

⁶⁵ Horvitz, 'Regime Itself Would Become a Target', *International Herald Tribune*, 10 October 1994, p. 1; Reuters, 'Irak: Saddam entretient le mystère', *Le Figaro*, 10 October 1994, p. 4; *New York Times* Editorial, 'A Reckless Iraqi Ploy', *International Herald Tribune*, 12 October 1994, p. 4; Vladimir Belyakov, 'In the Desert It Smells of New Storm', *Pravda*, 12 October 1994, p. 7

⁶⁶ 'U.S. Troops on Alert Amid Iraq Manoeuvres', *International Herald Tribune*, 8-9 October 1994, p. 1

⁶⁷ Michael R. Gordon, 'US Sends Force As Iraqi Soldiers Threaten Kuwait', *New York Times*, 8 October 1994, p. 1

aggression against Kuwait, expressed their 'profound preoccupation' with the movement of the Iraqi troops in the proximity of the Kuwait borders and summoned Baghdad to continue the co-operation with UNSCOM.⁶⁸ However, despite the show of unity among Council members, there were major differences among them concerning the political interpretation of the affair.⁶⁹

Faced with the 'strength and speed of our response',⁷⁰ Baghdad in a statement to the Iraqi News Agency on 10 October, announced that 'the friendly parties' with which it had contact regarding the lifting of sanctions, had expressed concern that the presence of Iraqi troops in Basra might be used by the U.S. as a pretext to resist international pressures to change its stance of maintaining the sanctions regime. According to the statement, Saddam Hussein therefore decided to move troops away from the southern area.⁷¹ At the same time, the Iraqi Ambassador at the U.N., Nizar Hamdoon, reiterated that Baghdad 'reserves the right to move them at any time in the future to wherever we want within Iraqi territory'.⁷²

Undoubtedly, the Iraqi statement was received with relief by Moscow, one of the 'friendly parties', which had been active in trying to diffuse the renewed Iraq crisis, regarding it as a unique opportunity to mediate between Baghdad and the international community, and change the *status quo* with regard to Iraq at the U.N. by breaking the stalemate resulting from division of the Security Council.

⁶⁸ Statement of the President of the U.N. Security Council, 8 October 1994, United Nations Document, S/PRST/1994/58

⁶⁹ Baudouin Bollaert, 'Unanimité en trompe-l'œil face à Saddam Hussein', *Le Figaro*, 10 October 1994, p. 5

⁷⁰ Bill Clinton, *My Life*, (London: Arrow Books, 2004), p. 624

⁷¹ United Nations Document, S/1994/1149; 'Iraq Announces Troop Pullback But U.S. Continues Gulf Build-up', *International Herald Tribune*, 11 October 1994, p. 1

⁷² Sheridan, 'Baghdad's Diplomacy Harks Back 1990', *The Independent*, 11 October 1994, p. 13

On one hand, the active participation of Russian diplomats in a resolution of the crisis allowed Moscow to increase its international prestige, which had been damaged by its diplomatic debacle over Bosnia, and on the other hand to further strengthen its relations with Baghdad. It also provided President Yeltsin, weakened by the collapse of the rouble ('Black Tuesday'), corruption affair in the army that surfaced following the murder of a Russian journalist in Moscow, as well as the growing tensions in the North Caucasus, with a great opportunity to appease his domestic opposition by demonstrating a policy approach independent to that of the U.S.⁷³ On the whole, the objectives of Moscow's diplomatic efforts appeared threefold: to broker a negotiated settlement of the crisis, prevent another American military operation in Iraq, and use the crisis to negotiate recognition of Kuwait, which in Russian eyes was a major obstacle to the lifting of sanctions against Iraq.

Consequently, on 8 October the Foreign Ministry issued a statement on the situation in the Gulf, which stated that the 'development of events in this direction [military confrontation] ought to be stopped', and noted that the Security Council must have 'the will to continue efforts to provide for the fulfilment of Iraqi resolutions', first of all with regard to the 'necessity of the recognition of Kuwait's sovereignty and its frontiers'.⁷⁴ At the same time, the Russian foreign minister indicated that Moscow was working behind the scenes to broker a negotiated settlement to the renewed crisis.

⁷³ However, in the Russian media the Iraqi crisis had not received the same attention as in the West, rarely making it to the front pages due to the focus on pressing domestic affairs mentioned above.

⁷⁴ Yulia Petrovskaya, Dmitri Gornostayev, 'Conflict Ripening in the Persian Gulf', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 October 1994, p. 1

Following a telephone conversation with Warren Christopher, Kozyrev argued that a threat of renewed hostilities could be averted through dialogue: 'We are in close contact with the U.N. Security Council. As we see it, it is still possible to settle the problem by diplomatic and political means'.⁷⁵ He also expressed hope that 'there will be no over-reaction' and indicated that while Russia had warned Iraq against aggression, it had sought to discourage Washington from precipitating military action.⁷⁶ On the practical level, to mediate between Iraq and the allies, but also to prepare the ground for the subsequent Russian efforts to tackle the issue of recognition of Kuwait, President Yeltsin dispatched deputy foreign minister Igor Ivanov and his special envoy to the Middle East Victor Posuvalyuk, to the region.⁷⁷

The Russian press, commenting on diplomatic activities to resolve the tensions, emphasised that Russia was 'well visible' and 'committed, unlike the U.S., not to resolve the crisis by forceful means straight away'.⁷⁸ Interestingly, in contrast to the American view, the Iraqi decision to withdraw was regarded as a result of Russian diplomacy, rather than the show of force on the part of the Gulf War allies. It was reported that Iraqi deputy prime minister Aziz had forwarded a notice about the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from the Kuwaiti border to the Russian embassy in Baghdad.⁷⁹

However, if for Moscow, the Iraqi retreat from the south opened the way for negotiations on the recognition of Kuwait, for Washington it meant an easily reversible concession on the part of the Iraqi leadership. Consequently, while

⁷⁵ Beeston, 'Kozyrev's Peace Moves Raise Boycott Suspicions', *The Times*, 11 October 1994, p. 11

⁷⁶ Sheridan, 'Yeltsin Sends Envoys to Gulf', *The Independent*, 12 October 1994, p. 15

⁷⁷ Marie Silven, 'Autumn Marathon of Russian Diplomacy. Successes and Miscalculations', *New Times (International)*, October 1994, p. 43

⁷⁸ Gornostayev, 'Tension Remains', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 13 October 1994, p. 1

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Russia announced that Kozyrev would go to Baghdad to 'help easing the tension in the region and promote stability',⁸⁰ the U.S. continued to dispatch its troops to the Gulf, declaring that the military build-up would continue in order to exclude the possibility of Iraq threatening its neighbours.⁸¹ In the American eyes, the Russian initiative was perceived as nothing more than an attempt to extract a statement from Iraq on the recognition of Kuwait in order to declare the crisis resolved and to call for the easing of sanctions. Thus, a senior Administration official, expressing Washington's scepticism, bluntly declared 'we are not buying it'.⁸²

At the U.N. Security Council, the renewed Iraq crisis raised the issue of its consequences for the Iraqi regime. While there was consensus that the future prevention of a potential Iraqi aggression was required, there were bitter disagreements as to the means to achieve this objective. The U.S. viewed the only possible solution in the demilitarisation of Iraq's southern area through permanent withdrawal of the well-equipped 20,000 Iraqi Republican Guards from the south, allowing only a 50,000-strong regular army to remain in the area, subject to the use of force if Iraq violated these provisions.⁸³

However, Russia and France considered the recognition of Kuwait by Iraq as the best long-term solution and the most direct path to the lifting of the embargo against Iraq.⁸⁴ Moreover, in view of the tough American stance on Iraq,

⁸⁰ Elaine Sciolino, 'Threats in the Gulf: the Overview', *New York Times*, 13 October 1994, p. 1

⁸¹ Horvitz, 'White House Continues Build-up Despite Retreat', *International Herald Tribune*, 13 October 1994, p. 1

⁸² Sciolino, *New York Times*, 13 October 1994, p. 1

⁸³ Horvitz, 'U.S. proposes Arms Ban For Zone in Southern Iraq', *International Herald Tribune*, 12 October 1994, p. 1; Sciolino, 'Threats in the Gulf: the Overview', *New York Times*, 13 October 1994, p. 1

⁸⁴ In a conversation with Aziz at the U.N. at the beginning of the crisis, the French Ambassador to the U.N. Jean-Bernard Mérimée argued that the lifting of sanctions would be blocked as long as

both appeared suspicious of the U.S. demilitarisation plan, which they knew was unacceptable to Baghdad, and viewed it as a pretext for another military showdown between Washington and Iraq.⁸⁵

The extent of the fissure within the Security Council on the Iraqi question was highlighted by the bitter battle of words between Paris and Washington.⁸⁶ Even though France criticised Baghdad for sending its troops towards Kuwait and, like Britain, sent its frigate *Georges Leygues* to the area,⁸⁷ it argued that Iraq had not violated any U.N. resolutions and opposed the U.S. demilitarisation plan. The French Defence Minister, François Leotard, went as far as to suggest that the American military build-up was 'not unconnected with domestic policies',⁸⁸ a view echoed by the French media,⁸⁹ which portrayed the American policy towards Iraq as President Clinton's attempt to repair his image ahead of the mid-term congressional elections following the Haiti debacle.⁹⁰

However, despite accusations by Albright that the French position was motivated by its commercial interests in Iraq,⁹¹ Washington, eager to obtain support for its proposal, amended its initial plan. It agreed to remove from the draft the word 'exclusion zone', which indicated a clear demarcation line beyond

Iraq did not 'move on the demand on the recognition of Kuwait'. Reuter, 'Mise en garde', *Le Figaro*, 9 October 1994, p. 2

⁸⁵ Claude Lorieux, 'Irak: la crainte du démembrement', *Le Figaro*, 13 October 1994, p. 3

⁸⁶ Crossette, 'Threats in the Gulf: the Diplomacy; Russia and Iraq Work Out Plan to Ease Gulf Tensions', *New York Times*, 14 October 1994, p. 16; Vladimir Bolshakov, 'Sober Voices', *Pravda*, 15 October 1994, p. 3

⁸⁷ Barry James, 'Arab Nations Steer Clear of Iraq's Sabre Rattling', *International Herald Tribune*, 11 October 1994, p. 8

⁸⁸ Charles Bremner, Michael Theodoulou, 'Sceptical French Voice Concern over U.S. Motives', *The Times*, 13 October 1994, p. 11

⁸⁹ Jean-Louis Dufour, 'Irak: que sait-on vraiment?', *Le Figaro*, 12 October 1994, p. 2

⁹⁰ On Clinton's Policy towards Haiti, for example, Thomas Carothers, 'American Invasion Isn't What Haiti Needs', *International Herald Tribune*, 13 May 1994, p. 6

⁹¹ Rupert Cornwell, Julian Nundy, Sarah Helm, 'U.S. Lashes Out at France as Allies Fall Out Over Iraq', *The Independent*, 14 October 1994, p. 14

which the Iraqi troops could not be deployed, but which kept the Republican Guards out of the area.⁹²

In the meantime, Kozyrev in Baghdad held talks with the Iraqi leadership aimed at persuading Iraq to recognise Kuwait. Commenting on Kozyrev's trip, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* argued that there were reasons to believe that his talks would be beneficial for the settlement of the crisis in the Gulf due to the fact that Moscow and Baghdad had 'traditionally good relations'. It emphasised that 'no country in the West can conduct negotiations with Saddam Hussein regime directly', as any type of agreement reached through the U.N. 'could at any point be re-interpreted by the U.S. the way they want it'.⁹³

On 13 October, Russia and Iraq announced that they had reached an agreement that would lead to the recognition of Kuwait. In the joint Russian-Iraqi communiqué, Iraq 'confirmed its willingness to solve the issue of recognising Kuwait and its borders as demanded by the Security Council Resolution 833 in a positive manner'. The communiqué further stated that 'following Iraq's formal recognition of Kuwait's sovereignty and borders, Russia will support setting the date for the formal operation of the long-term monitoring system in accordance with the Security Council Resolution 715'. The parties emphasised that the monitoring period 'ought not to exceed six months', and that 'from the Russian point of view', the Security Council should then lift the sanctions if Iraq complied during that period.⁹⁴

Even though the statement amounted to Baghdad's most explicit step towards the recognition of Kuwait, it failed, contrary to Kozyrev's assertion that

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Gornostayev, 'In Russian Competency', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 14 October 1994, p. 1

⁹⁴ Joint Russian-Iraqi Communiqué, transmitted to the President of the U.N. Security Council on 14 October 1994, United Nations Document, S/1994/1173

the deal had no conditions attached and that keeping up the sanctions would be an act of 'vengeance',⁹⁵ to formally declare recognition. Rather, it linked the Iraqi move to the agreement by the U.N. to set up a limited monitoring period, and therefore to the lifting of sanctions within a fixed time-frame.⁹⁶

Not surprising therefore that while the agreement fully corresponded to the Russian view of the matter, it was rejected by the U.S. and Britain. Furthermore, having obtained support for its amended proposal from Britain and France, which in the final account appeared reluctant to mount any serious opposition to Saudi Arabia's wishes for U.S.-led action,⁹⁷ Washington was determined to bring through its plan in the Security Council and insisted on voting before Kozyrev's return to the U.N.⁹⁸

Indicating a possible American unilateral military strike against Iraq, President Clinton declared at the White House that 'the U.S. will not allow Iraq to threaten its neighbours', and the U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry in Kuwait insisted that Iraq had not pulled its troops back far enough, and talked 'about military action'.⁹⁹ Warren Christopher, in explaining the American position, argued that any consideration to lifting sanctions was 'seriously misguided', and that there could be no question of rewarding the Iraqi leadership for its latest intimidation.¹⁰⁰ The White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers added: 'We are

⁹⁵ George Graham, Mark Nicholson, Steward Dalby, 'U.S. Rebuffs Russian Mediation on Kuwait', *Financial Times*, 15 October 1994, p. 3

⁹⁶ Mark Nicholson, Steward Dalby and George Graham, 'U.S. Cool to Iraqi-Russian Overture on Kuwaiti Border', *Financial Times*, 14 October 1994, p. 5

⁹⁷ Joseph Fitchett, 'U.S. Finds Support For Arms-Free Zone', *International Herald Tribune*, 13 October 1994, p. 1

⁹⁸ Reuters, 'Irak: les amis retrouvés', *Le Figaro*, 15 October 1994, p. 4; James Bone, 'Deal Threatens to Provoke U.N. Showdown', *The Times*, 15 October 1994, p. 18

⁹⁹ Walker, Black, 'U.S. Rejects Russia's Peace Deal for Iraq', *The Guardian*, 15 October 1994, p. 15

¹⁰⁰ Cornwell, 'Clinton Rejects Baghdad Overture', *The Independent*, 15 October 1994, p. 10

not going to reward them for a belligerent posture'.¹⁰¹

Similarly, the British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, on a tour of the Middle East at the time, argued that the Russians 'could not deliver', and called their agreement with Iraq 'clearly inadequate', as 'it appears to give Saddam Hussein a reward for his provocative actions'.¹⁰² In his view, the agreement failed to meet the concern of Iraq's potential threat to its neighbours, making it necessary 'to find a way of preventing that threat from coming again'.¹⁰³

Consequently, despite Moscow's objections and pleas to delay the vote until the return of the Russian foreign minister to the U.N. headquarters in New York, Washington insisted on going forward. The U.S. argued that while Kozyrev's talks pursued the recognition of Kuwait, the U.S.-sponsored resolution focused strictly on the renewed threat Iraq had posed in the Gulf.¹⁰⁴

At the same time, while Iraq maintained that it had pulled back its troops by the night of 12 October, U.S. officials claimed that several thousand members of Iraqi elite units remained near the city of Naseriyah, and warned that the U.S. might attack Iraq with or without U.N. support.¹⁰⁵ In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Clinton warned that he would do 'whatever is necessary' to force Iraq to withdraw its units from the Kuwaiti border, and expressed irritation with Moscow for trying to negotiate the easing of sanctions.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ 'Russian Says Iraqis Yield on Sovereignty of Kuwait', *International Herald Tribune*, 15-16 October 1994, p. 1

¹⁰² Walker, Black, 'U.S. Rejects Russia's Peace Deal for Iraq', *The Guardian*, 15 October 1994, p. 15

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Crossette, 'U.S. is Demanding a Quick U.N. Vote on Iraqi Pullback', *New York Times*, 15 October 1994, p. 1

¹⁰⁵ Reuters, 'Golfe: Washington renforce son dispositif', *Le Figaro*, 17 October 1994, p. 8

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Lippman, 'Up to 10,000 Iraqi Troops Stop Retreat from Kuwait Border', *Washington Post*, 14 October 1994, p. 1

The fundamental discrepancy between Washington and Moscow's approaches to the Iraqi crisis¹⁰⁷ was also highlighted by the visits of William Perry, the U.S. Secretary of Defence, and the Russian foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev to Kuwait on the same day of 14 October. The former, arriving at Kuwait airport, began his speech by declaring that he had 'brought good news to the people of Kuwait and the whole Middle East, good news that this day the independence of Kuwait is reinforced' and promised further U.S. troop reinforcements in the Gulf. According to Perry, these troops would not be brought home 'as long as Iraq continues to threaten peace and stability in the Gulf', and would be expanded in consideration of an 'additional application of force as an appropriate response to the threat posed by Iraq...if the heavy Iraqi units remain in the south'.¹⁰⁸

The Russian foreign minister, arriving at the same airport half an hour later, also brought 'good news for the people of Kuwait', namely Baghdad's declaration of the recognition of borders and sovereignty of the sheikdom, declaring that 'the difficult page in the relations between two countries had been turned', and that now 'what remains is to lift the sanctions against Iraq'.¹⁰⁹

However, while the American line gained support from the rulers of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the Russian approach raised suspicion regarding the real motives of Moscow's diplomacy. Even though Kozyrev later argued that the Russian initiative was misunderstood due to the 'bad translation,' the fact that his press conference was held in English excluded any misinterpretation on the part of

¹⁰⁷ Belyakov, 'Two Approaches', *Pravda*, 20 October 1994, p. 3

¹⁰⁸ Robert Fisk, 'Allies Differ on War or Peace as Iraq Retreats', *The Independent*, 15 October 1994, p. 10

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

the Gulf media.¹¹⁰

Nor did Russia find the expected support at the Security Council. Even though Moscow strongly objected to the timing of the vote on the resolution on Iraq, the vote was fixed for 15 October, making it impossible for Kozyrev to report back to the Council. Faced with the inevitability of the adoption of this resolution and lacking support from France and China, Russia chose to join ranks with all the other members of the Security Council and voted in its favour, in spite of the fact that the text did not include a position statement in the preamble about Iraq's promise to recognise Kuwait as advocated by the Russian representative.¹¹¹ Significantly, and contrary to Moscow's expectations, the resolution also refrained from acknowledging the Russian diplomatic efforts, and instead used the words 'welcoming all diplomatic and other efforts to resolve the crisis'.¹¹² However, eager not to admit the failure of its diplomatic activities and showing itself conciliatory, the Russian representative Vasily Sidorov, in explaining Russia's position with regard to the vote, while calling the resolution 'an over-hastily act', stated the need to put aside differences in the name of unity on an important principle.¹¹³

In commenting on Russian diplomatic efforts, *The New York Times* argued that despite the rejection of Moscow's deal, Kozyrev had achieved an important goal in getting the world's attention and making Russia's voice heard.¹¹⁴ In contrast, Vladimir Lukin, former Russian ambassador to the U.S. and head of the

¹¹⁰ Shumilin, 'Bluff in the Desert', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 16-23 October 1994, p. 13

¹¹¹ Crossette, 'Threats in the Gulf: The United Nations; Security Council Condemns Iraq's Threat to Kuwait', *New York Times*, 16 October 1994, p. 12

¹¹² Paragraph 3

¹¹³ Crossette, 'U.N. Council Unanimous in Condemning Iraq Move', *New York Times*, 17 October 1994, p. 10

¹¹⁴ Steven Erlanger, 'Threats in the Gulf: in Moscow; Russians Make Their Voice Heard', *New York Times*, 18 October 1994, p. 16

International Affairs Committee in the Duma, in an article in *Moskovskie Novosti*, re-assessing Moscow's policy in the Gulf since the Gorbachov era, argued that Russia's policy remained 'built on sand', as it attempted to join the West 'with an honest face', while pursuing 'its own game with changing directions'.¹¹⁵ Analysing whether Moscow's special role had benefited Russia's interests in the Middle East, Lukin concluded that it managed to destroy the working relationship with the U.S. Administration and allowed the Iraqi leader to strengthen his prestige, while failing to convince the world to lift the sanctions against Iraq. It concluded: 'If our national interest consists in bringing closer the start of Iraqi debt repayment while not making the relations with the West worse, as a result of recent diplomacy, we have made the situation more complicated in both directions'.¹¹⁶

Russian efforts were indeed dashed when Tareq Aziz, addressing the Security Council on 17 October, reiterated Iraq's willingness to consider recognising Kuwait, but failed to announce the unconditional recognition as demanded by the U.N. and hoped for by Moscow.¹¹⁷ Just minutes before Aziz's speech, Kozyrev, reporting to the Council suggested that Iraq had no intention of invading Kuwait. He argued that Russia's joint communiqué with Iraq proved that Baghdad understood the need of recognising the sovereignty and borders of Kuwait, and that it would be necessary for the international community to consider the lifting of sanctions if Iraq continued to co-operate with U.N. weapons

¹¹⁵ Vladimir Lukin, 'A Sparkler in the Arabian Sands', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 23 October 1994, p. 13

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Beeston, 'Baghdad Failure to Recognise Kuwait Angers U.N. Chiefs', *The Times*, 18 October 1994, p. 14

monitors.¹¹⁸

Eager to preserve his face in the light of Iraq's unexpected change of mind, the Russian foreign minister subsequently insisted that following the settlement of the crisis, the main task was to proceed to post-crisis settlement that consisted in the official recognition of Kuwait. In his opinion, the international community ought to refrain from the 'final "no" to Iraq', and the U.S. ought to show more restraint in serious political question.¹¹⁹ In his report to the Security Council Kozyrev reiterated the earlier Russian position that it was possible to begin a long-term monitoring programme in Iraq within a month, and that if six months of monitoring saw full co-operation by Iraq, the Council ought to decide whether to lift the oil embargo. Thereafter, full Iraqi compliance with other sanctions ought to be met with the lifting of remaining sanctions.¹²⁰ This view was rejected by Britain and the U.S. who argued that Iraq needed to comply with 'all relevant U.N. resolutions' before it would consider the lifting of sanctions, and expressed doubt if this could ever be achieved while Saddam Hussein was in power.¹²¹

Subsequently, the Russian government continued its dialogue with Baghdad in the hope of persuading Saddam Hussein to recognise Kuwait.¹²² This time, Moscow's efforts proved more successful, as during talks with Tareq Aziz in Moscow in the first week of November, the latter delivered a letter from

¹¹⁸ Sciolino, 'Threats in the Gulf: at the United Nations; U.S. Criticises a Russian Aide at the U.N. on Iraq', *New York Times*, 18 October 1994, p. 1

¹¹⁹ Gornostayev, 'Don't Say 'No' to Saddam Hussein', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 October 1994, p. 1

¹²⁰ Horvitz, 'Defying U.S., Russia Pushes U.N. on Lifting Oil Embargo on Iraq', *International Herald Tribune*, 18 October 1994, p. 5

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Eggert, 'In the Life of Andrei Kozyrev There Is Always a Place for Celebration', *Izvestia*, 10 November 1994, p. 1

Saddam Hussein addressed to President Yeltsin.¹²³ Aziz, once again signalled to Russia that Baghdad was prepared to recognise Kuwait's sovereignty in return for Russia's voice of support for the easing of sanctions against Iraq.¹²⁴ This prompted Moscow's decision to send immediately Kozyrev to Baghdad to secure the announcement on the spot.¹²⁵ However, while the minister's much contested trip to Iraq was largely perceived as a victory for Russia's diplomacy,¹²⁶ his address to the Iraqi Parliament, in which he expressed his 'delight' with the 'political wisdom' of Saddam Hussein who had decided to recognise Kuwait,¹²⁷ was viewed at best as 'strange'.¹²⁸

Commenting on his visit to Iraq, Kozyrev stated that Russia supported Iraq's call for the lifting of sanctions, and noted that while he was aware of the U.S. reaction to his initiative, he hoped that the Americans would overcome their 'emotions'.¹²⁹

However, this hope proved to be wishful thinking, as Washington reacted coolly to the Russian report. The U.S. State Department argued that Iraq's recognition of Kuwait's sovereignty and borders was not enough to bring about the lifting of sanctions. According to the Department's spokesman, David Johnson, Kuwait's recognition 'would not in itself establish Iraq's peaceful

¹²³ Associated Press, 'Russians Hold Out Hope Iraq Will Recognise Kuwait', *International Herald Tribune*, 9 November 1994, p. 8

¹²⁴ Beeston, 'Saddam Ready to Concede', *The Times*, 9 November 1994, p. 14

¹²⁵ Black, David Fairhall, 'Iraq and Russia Near Deal', *The Guardian*, 9 November 1994, p. 14

¹²⁶ Sergei Medvedko, 'Will Baghdad Return to International Community?', *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 16 November 1994, p. 9

¹²⁷ Excerpts of the speech, in Karpov, 'Moscow Needs a Stable Peace. Washington a Small Victorious War', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 12 November 1994, p. 1

¹²⁸ Elmar Guseinov, 'In Two Visits to Baghdad, Kozyrev Persuades Saddam to Meet U.N.'s Four-Year-Old Demand', *Izvestia*, 12 November 1994, p. 3

¹²⁹ 'Kozyrev on Russian Position on Iraq', Radio Free Europe (RFE)/Radio Liberty (RL) Newline, 13 November 1994

intentions which were called into question by its provocation in October'.¹³⁰ The White House added that there were 'a number of other elements in U.N. resolutions that Iraq must adhere to before we can even discuss lifting of sanctions'.¹³¹

Similarly, other Security Council members, apart from China reacted cautiously to Iraq's recognition of Kuwait. Beijing welcomed the Iraqi move as a 'major step toward the final settlement of the issues left over from the Gulf War',¹³² and the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Shen Guofang, maintained that 'given the recent developments', the international community 'shall now consider the gradual lifting of sanctions...so as to ease the Iraqi people's sufferings'.¹³³

Consequently, in spite of Iraq's presentation of the required documents, certifying its recognition of Kuwait to the Security Council at the routine review of the sanctions on 15 November, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Madeleine Albright, argued that the recognition of Kuwait *per se* was not sufficient to warrant the lifting of sanctions, in particular in view of Iraq's recent troop movement along the border with Kuwait, and presented new evidence of Saddam Hussein's lavish lifestyle.¹³⁴ As a result, this time, too, the Council voted for the maintenance of sanctions.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ U.S. State Department's spokesman David Johnson, quoted by Associated Press, 'Russians Hold Out Hope Iraq Will Recognise Kuwait', *International Herald Tribune*, 9 November 1994, p. 8

¹³¹ White House spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers, quoted in 'Washington Cautious on Iraq's Kuwait Stand', *International Herald Tribune*, 11 November 1994, p. 1

¹³² Reuters, 'China Asks to Start Easing Iraq Sanctions', *International Herald Tribune*, 12-13 November 1994, p. 4

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Michael R. Gordon, 'Saddam the Spender: A Palatial US \$1 Billion', *International Herald Tribune*, 15 November 1994, p. 5

¹³⁵ Richard Lyons, 'U.N. Council Decides to Keep Economic Sanctions on Iraq', *New York Times*, 15 November 1994, p. 6

Commenting on Baghdad's recognition of Kuwait, the Russian Foreign Ministry considered Iraq's step a 'historic event'.¹³⁶ A commentator in *Pravda* hailed the Iraqi decision as a 'major step towards normalisation of the situation in the Persian Gulf', once again reminding that it were Russian diplomats who 'launched the initiative to diffuse the tension in the region'.¹³⁷ However, Viktor Posuvalyuk was against calling the Russian effort 'mediation'. In his opinion, Russia 'as a great power and the country that had bore the most tangible losses from the sanctions regime amid the members of the international community', had maintained the course taken by the U.N. in an 'honest and good conscious manner'. In his interpretation of the events, the Iraqi leadership was ready to recognize Kuwait, 'but did not have anyone, apart from Russia to be present at the adoption of the decision at least as a witness and a country that showed to the world community the need of adequate measures and responsive steps'.¹³⁸

Following the failure to turn the October crisis into a positive force for the lifting of sanctions against Baghdad, the pro-Iraqi activity of the Russian representatives at the United Nations had visibly decreased. In the Russian press, this strategic move was explained as an attempt on Moscow's side to 'at least temporarily and partially' get rid of its image as an 'advocate' of the Iraqi regime,¹³⁹ which had damaged Russia's relations with the Gulf states and the country's international standing.

On 20 December 1994, Ekeus reported to the Security Council that Iraq was 'falling far short' in complying on the question of biological and chemical

¹³⁶ Quoted by Karpov, 'Iraq's Constructive Step', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 November 1994, p. 1

¹³⁷ Belyakov, 'Initiative Bears Fruit', *Pravda*, 12 November 1994, p. 3

¹³⁸ Quoted by Karpov, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 November 1994, p. 1

¹³⁹ Alexander Ivanov, 'Moscow Loses Positions in the Security Council', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 January 1995, p. 2

weapons and had been reluctant to provide information on past production and imports. Russia and France circulated a draft statement praising Iraq for its level of compliance, and calling on Baghdad to provide an immediate 'full and transparent accounting of its past programmes'.¹⁴⁰ But subsequently Moscow preferred to go along with the position of the majority of the Council members vis-à-vis Baghdad.

Consequently, on 14 April 1995, Russia voted in favour of a renewable plan set up by Resolution 986,¹⁴¹ which permitted Iraq to sell up to US\$2 billion in oil within 180 days under the supervision of the U.N. to pay for badly needed medicine and food,¹⁴² even though the plan was rejected by the Iraqi government as a 'dangerous violation of Iraq's sovereignty and national unity'.¹⁴³ Similarly, during the subsequent sanctions reviews, Moscow joined ranks with other permanent Council members who declined to lift the sanctions¹⁴⁴ and expressed doubts over Iraq's compliance with regard to the disclosure of its biological weapons programmes, in particular following the information obtained after the defection of Chief Lieutenant Hussein Kamel al-Majid to Jordan in August 1995.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Crossette, 'Iraq Hinders Arms Monitors, U.N. Panel Reports', *New York Times*, 21 December 1994, p. 10

¹⁴¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 986 (1995), Security Council Meeting 3519, 14 April 1995; adopted unanimously

¹⁴² Crossette, 'U.N. Council Votes to Ease Sanctions Against Baghdad', *New York Times*, 15 April 1995, p. 1

¹⁴³ Agencies in Baghdad, 'Iraq Rejects U.N. Offer on Oil Sales As Violation of Sovereignty', *The Guardian*, 17 April 1995, p. 7; also Crossette, 'Iraqi Denounce U.N. Oil Proposal', *New York Times*, 16 April 1995, p. 1

¹⁴⁴ 'World News Briefs: U.N. Doubting Iraq, Declines to Lift Sanctions', *New York Times*, 12 July 1995, p. 7; Associated Press, 'U.N. Extends Its Sanctions Against Iraqis', *New York Times*, 9 September 1995, p. 3

¹⁴⁵ Editorial, 'Don't take Iraq's Word For It', *New York Times*, 24 August 1995, p. 22; John Simpson, *The Wars Against Saddam: Taking the Hard Road to Baghdad*, (London: Macmillan, 2004), pp. 243-244

On 1 November 1995, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* referred to an Arab newspaper, which quoted a high-ranking Russian Foreign Ministry official as stating that Moscow would not insist on the lifting of sanctions on Iraq in the near future.¹⁴⁶ The statement followed an unsuccessful car bomb attempt on the life of a Russian diplomat in Baghdad, which was perceived in Moscow as a sign of disapproval of its pro-Saddam policy by the Iraqi opposition. However, while temporarily reducing its pro-Iraqi lobbying at the United Nations, Moscow continued to maintain and expand its direct contacts with Baghdad, waiting for another opportunity to match its bilateral successes to its international efforts to lift the sanctions.

¹⁴⁶ Shumilin, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 1 November 1995, p. 4

Chapter 4: The politics of trade and diplomacy, 1994-1995

We ate the great presidential fish and drank beer with Saddam Hussein, talking for five hours - four hours me and one hour Saddam.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky on his trip to Baghdad on the eve of the Iraqi Presidential Elections on 16 October 1995¹

When Yevgeny Primakov was appointed Russian foreign minister to replace the widely unpopular Andrei Kozyrev on 9 January 1996, his nomination was regarded by many Russian and Western political analysts as signalling a major turn in Russian foreign policy.² This was not surprising considering the professional background of the new head of the Foreign Ministry. Primakov supported the 'Eurasianist' camp that rejected the 'Atlantists'' one-sided orientation towards the West, favoured a diversified foreign policy and advocated the re-assertion of Russian power in the post-Soviet space. Prior to his political career, he had been *Pravda* correspondent in the Middle East during the 1960s, continued in academia at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations and Institute of Oriental Studies, earning membership of the Central Committee together with a full membership of Politburo, and ultimately became Gorbachov's key adviser during the Gulf crisis and the head of the KGB, which was subsequently transformed into the Federal Intelligence Service.³

Consequently, President Yeltsin's choice of Primakov, renowned for his experience of the Arab world and language, as well as for his long-standing ties of

¹ quoted in 'Quote of the Day', *Pravda*, 17 October 1995, p. 3

² Allen C. Lynch, 'The Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy in the 1990s' in Rick Fawn and Steven White (eds.), *Russia After Communism*, (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 167

³ Marina Pavlova-Silvanskaya, 'No Stranger to the Foreign Ministry Staff, And No Stranger to His New Job', *New Times* (International), February 1996, p. 23

friendship with Middle Eastern leaders, including Saddam Hussein, indicated the growing importance of the Middle East in Russian foreign policy and presaged a renewed focus on restoration of Russia's status as a global power.

However, a closer examination of Moscow's foreign policy before January 1996, revealed that the major changes in the country's external strategy had already occurred prior to Primakov's appointment.⁴ The new dynamics in Moscow's approach to foreign affairs had become apparent by 1993, and over the next two years continued to be fuelled by the domestic opposition to Kozyrev's West-oriented policies, and its attempts to undermine the Yeltsin government.⁵ In particular, the Parliamentary elections on 12 December 1993, while strengthening Yeltsin's power and bringing about a more co-operative Duma, increased the influence of the nationalist forces - Vladimir Zhirinovsky's *Liberal Democratic Party* received 22.79 percent of the votes.⁶ As a result, the communists increased their opposition to the President and his government on all foreign policy issues,⁷ *inter alia*, through their increased representation in the Duma Committees on Security, International Affairs, CIS Affairs and on the Questions of Geopolitics.⁸

As a consequence, the 'Zhirinovsky factor'⁹ - the influence of reactionary and radically anti-Western approach on Russian politics - came to be viewed with

⁴ Robert O. Freedman correctly argues that Kozyrev's replacement 'should be seen as an exclamation point for a series of major policy changes.' 'Russian Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Kozyrev Legacy?', *Caspian Crossroads Magazine*, Vol. 1, № 4, Winter 1996, available online at: <http://ourworld.compuserve.com?HOMEPAGES/USAZERB/144.htm>, viewed on 20 July 2005

⁵ A. Belyaev, N. Biryukov, L. Gusev, V. Sergeyev, *The State Duma in 1994-1995* (Russian), Research by the Centre of World Economics, № 16, (Moscow: MGIMO, 1999), pp. 31-32

⁶ Boris Poklad, 'Unexpected Logical Outcome', *Pravda*, 29 December 1993, p. 5

⁷ Lee Hockstader, 'Yeltsin and Legislators Set for a Struggle', *International Herald Tribune*, 10 January 1994, p. 5

⁸ Mikhail Karpov, 'Duma and Foreign Policy of Russian Federation', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 January 1994, p. 1

⁹ On Zhirinovsky's political career and his role in Russian politics see Elena Klepikova, Vladimir Solovyov, Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, *Zhirinovsky: Russian Fascism and the Making of a Dictator*, (Reading: Perseus Publishing, 1995)

concern in international political circles, and particularly in the Arab world, where the Russian nationalist openly presented himself as Saddam Hussein's friend. This even prompted a joint Russian-American declaration on the Middle East, which asserted that despite the election results, Russian policy remained unchanged.¹⁰

However, even if Moscow was not prepared to openly support the Iraqi leader, or advance the 'last push to the south' called for by Zhirinovsky,¹¹ by 1994, its policy towards the Middle East was evolving into a more assertive and pragmatic approach. On one hand it aimed at reviving the economically beneficial ties with former Soviet allies in the region, and on the other hand at playing a more active role in the peace process in order to increase Russia's international prestige.

Moscow's first opportunity to engage in the peace process diplomacy independent of the U.S. occurred on 25 February 1994, when a Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein shot dead 29 Palestinians in the Hebron Ibrahimi Mosque, thereby prompting the PLO and Israel to suspend their peace talks.¹² In an attempt to bring about the resumption of negotiations, Moscow launched its own diplomatic initiative. It proposed to convene a second Madrid Conference, supported the PLO's call for adoption of a U.N. resolution condemning the Hebron massacre and advocated the establishment of an international presence in the occupied territories aimed at providing security for Palestinians.¹³

To secure support for these proposals, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, on Yeltsin's order travelled to Jerusalem and Tunis on 3

¹⁰ Alexander Shumilin, 'Middle East Advances Towards Peace, But is Afraid of Zhirinovsky', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 23-30 January 1994, p. 12

¹¹ Vladimir Zhirinovsky, *Vladimir Zhirinovsky Speaks with Russia* (Russian). (Moscow: RAYT, 1995), Volume 1, pp. 109-114

¹² 'News Summary', *New York Times*, 26 February 1994, p. 2

¹³ Paul Lewis, 'West Bank Massacre; U.S. Voices Annoyance Over U.N. Chief's Offer to Send Observers', *New York Times*, 28 February 1994, p. 8

March to urge both Israel and the PLO to return to the negotiating table without preconditions.¹⁴ A week later, Kozyrev, identifying the objectives of Moscow's activities as attempts 'to see how we can save the peace process', paid an uninvited visit to Israel in an effort to advance the Russian initiative that had been coolly received in Jerusalem during Ivanov's earlier trip, and met with the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat in Tunis.¹⁵

Summarising the results of his trip, the Russian foreign minister praised the Palestinian leader for adopting 'a very simple dramatic decision to return to the negotiation table despite the Hebron tragedy'.¹⁶ In his view, the latter's decision had been greatly influenced by the direct message from President Yeltsin and efforts undertaken by Russia and the U.S. In an interview, Viktor Posuvalyuk who had just been appointed Yeltsin's special envoy in the Middle East,¹⁷ emphasised that Moscow intended to play a significant role in the Middle East, arguing that 'Russia occupies its own broad niche in the region, a niche that owing to Russia's unique identity – primarily historical and spiritual, cannot be claimed by anyone'.¹⁸

Despite Russia's co-sponsorship of the peace process, the U.S. was 'more than irritated' by Moscow's diplomatic initiatives and regarding them as 'meddling', as they conflicted with Washington's own efforts to restart the peace talks.¹⁹ Even if Ivanov argued that Russia 'could be an equal partner with all

¹⁴ Ian Black, Derek Brown, 'Jerusalem Issue Blocks UN Draft', *The Guardian*, 4 March 1994, p. 12

¹⁵ Brown, 'Russia Presses Its Plan on Israel', *The Guardian*, 12 March 1994, p. 13

¹⁶ Dmitri Gornostayev, 'Kozyrev for the United Nations Security Council Resolution', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 15 March 1994, p. 1

¹⁷ Charles Richards, 'Russia's Mideast 'Mission'', *The Independent*, 12 March 1994, p. 13

¹⁸ Ivan Menshikov, 'Moscow Takes Active Role', *Segodnya*, 12 March 1994, p. 5

¹⁹ Martin Walker, 'American Policy Takes a New Slant', *The Guardian*, 5 April 1994, p. 9

parties and not an advocate for one of them',²⁰ Russia, having decided to 'show its face',²¹ clearly supported the PLO line of delaying the resumption of talks to extract a maximum of concessions from Israel, whereas the U.S. insisted on the rapid recommencement of talks.²² It was in that spirit that the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher travelled to the Middle East a day before Kozyrev to meet with Arafat and urge him to resume talks unconditionally or face the U.S. veto of the U.N. resolution condemning the massacre.²³ Not surprisingly, Arafat during that meeting with Christopher said he supported Moscow's independent move.²⁴

This prompted the conclusion by *The Guardian* correspondent that PLO once again had found a 'powerful non-American friend to counterbalance America's pro-Israel tilt'.²⁵ Already before the meeting with Ivanov, the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin raised concern about 'the possibility of an attempt to exploit it [the Russian-U.S. non co-operation] by some of the partners in the negotiations', implicitly criticising Russia's unilateral diplomatic initiative.²⁶

However, Moscow dismissed suggestions that it was competing with Washington on the matter. Ivanov emphasised that 'we are not at the Olympic Games...Russian-U.S. co-sponsorship provides for joint efforts of the two countries, but also for the independent diplomatic actions of each of them'.²⁷

²⁰ Igor Ivanov, 'What Russia Defends in the Middle East', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 6-13 March 1994, p. 5

²¹ Shumilin, 'Middle East Before and After Hebron', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 6-13 March 1994, p. 12

²² Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for the Middle East Peace*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Groux, 2004), pp. 126-133

²³ Julian Ozzane, 'U.S.-Russian Split over Mideast Peace Talks', *Financial Times*, 11 March 1994, p. 4

²⁴ Ozzane, *Financial Times*, 11 March 1994, p. 4

²⁵ Brown, *The Guardian*, 12 March 1994, p. 13

²⁶ Black, Brown, *The Guardian*, 4 March 1994, p. 12

²⁷ Igor Ivanov, *Moskovskie Novosti*, 6-13 March 1994, p. 5

More significantly, the Russian stance was clarified in an article in *Izvestia* by Andrei Kozyrev, who while reiterating that there was no 'sensible alternative' to partnership, rejected 'some illusions', in particular 'the fantasy that a partnership can be built...on the principle of 'Russia should follow us in every way''.²⁸ He emphasised that Russia was 'doomed to be a great power' and consequently 'can only be an equal partner'. More importantly, Kozyrev argued that a partnership based on common values did not mean 'renouncing a firm-aggressive policy of defending one's own national interests, or at times, competition and disputes'.²⁹

Accordingly, Moscow regarded its active participation in the Middle East peace process as 'natural', even though a Russian commentator admitted that co-operation between the co-sponsors 'is not proceeding without difficulties'.³⁰ At the same time, it was certainly recognised in the Kremlin that Washington was the main peace-maker in the region, whereas Moscow's role had only a formal character.³¹ It was this recognition that prompted another Russian commentator to complain that 'Russia has no means to practically influence the conflicting sides'.³²

In spite of its inability to contribute financially, Russia was eager to 'get rid of its image as Washington's junior partner' and received first Yasser Arafat on 19 April, and then Yitzhak Rabin on 24 April, in Moscow on official visits.³³ During his stay, Arafat met with President Yeltsin, the Duma Speaker Ivan

²⁸ Andrei Kozyrev, 'Russia and the U.S.: Partnership Is Not Premature, It Is Overdue', *Izvestia*, 11 March 1994, p. 3

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Karpov, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 9 April 1994, p. 1

³¹ Sergei Strokan, 'PLO and Russia: New Rapprochement', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 17-24 April 1994, p. 13

³² Konstantin Kapitonov, 'Arafat Was Supported by Us', *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 27 April 1994, p. 9

³³ Strokan, *Moskovskie Novosti*, 17-24 April 1994, p. 13

Rybkin the Interior Minister Viktor Yerin, as well as Metropolit Alexei II, and signed documents calling for the advancement of the peace process.³⁴ The Palestinian leader was assured of Russian support for Palestinian efforts to oppose the extremist forces that disturbed the peace process, and was offered assistance in creating the Palestinian police that would be responsible for maintaining order in Gaza and Jericho.³⁵ Commenting on Arafat's visit, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* concluded that it had been useful to Russia, as the PLO leader 'facilitated Russia's ambition to look more important on the Middle Eastern scene than it is in reality'.³⁶

In contrast to Arafat's visit that focused on the peace process, Rabin's meetings with President Yeltsin and high-ranking Russian officials concentrated on the expansion of bilateral economic relations, in particular co-operation on armament production.³⁷ In the political realm, Yeltsin during talks with Rabin emphasised that Russia was willing to sign 'any agreement with Israel in the sphere of security'.³⁸ Interestingly, despite the success of Rabin's visit, a commentator in *Moskovskie Novosti* argued that it was necessary for Russia to define its economic priorities in the Middle East, and concluded that 'following the logic of numbers', it was clear that 'Israel is not as interesting to Russia as the Arab states'.³⁹

Another opportunity for Moscow to increase its role in the peace process was provided with the agreement between Israel and the PLO to sign an accord on

³⁴ ITAR-TASS, 'Yasser Arafat Expresses His Thanks', *Pravda*, 21 April 1994, p. 3

³⁵ Kapitonov, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 27 April 1994, p. 9

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ ITAR-TASS, 'Y. Rabin Positively Surprised', *Pravda*, 28 April 1994, p. 3

³⁸ ITAR-TASS, 'Talks Were Very Successful', *Pravda*, 29 April 1994, p. 3

³⁹ Dmitri Kulik, 'Middle East: Russia's Return', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 24 April-1 May 1994, p. 12

Palestinian autonomy in Gaza and Jericho on 4 May in Cairo.⁴⁰ This shifted the emphasis of the peace talks to Syria, a former Soviet ally that by 1994 once again became a focal point of Russian diplomacy in the Middle East.⁴¹ In March, the First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets visited the Syrian capital. It was reported that Moscow offered Syria military co-operation and was considering writing off Syrian debts of more than US\$10 billion.⁴² A month later, another Russian delegation travelled to Syria and reached a military and technical co-operation agreement with Damascus, the first since the disintegration of the USSR.

Even though Rabin, during his visit to Moscow, had urged Russia not to supply advanced weapons to Syria, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Kolokolov argued that while he could 'understand Israel's concern' on the matter, 'the Syrians, too, have concerns about the acquisition of advanced weapons by Israel from the West. If we don't sell to the Syrians, others will'.⁴³ At the same time, he emphasised that Moscow would only sell Damascus defensive weapons and spare parts for arms purchased under the previous contracts, adding that 'Russia will not sell offensive weapons to anyone'.⁴⁴

This view corresponded to the generally accepted belief in Moscow that if Russia refrained from selling weapons, others would fill the vacuum. In this connection, a commentator in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* argued that 'we would not only lose the additional hard currency for the reform of the Russian economy, but in the conditions of limited spending for own defence, could finally ourselves turn

⁴⁰ Kapitonov, 'Israel is Exchanging Peace Land for Peace', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 1-8 April 1994, p. 13

⁴¹ At the same time, Moscow was able to use the peace process to re-establish co-operation with Syria.

⁴² Kapitonov, *Moskovskie Novosti*, 1-8 April 1994, p. 13

⁴³ David Hirst, 'Russia Agrees to Sell Arms to Syria', *The Guardian*, 29 April 1994, p. 14

⁴⁴ Ibid.

into arms importers'.⁴⁵ In confirming this opinion, Kozyrev in a meeting with a group of U.S. Congressmen in Moscow declared that Russia did not intend to give up the export of arms unilaterally and instead, proposed to work on common rules regulating the arms export.⁴⁶

However, Russia's return to the international arms market,⁴⁷ which following the collapse of the USSR had been dominated by the U.S., led to periodic tensions between Moscow and Washington that were to intensify further with the Russian decision to sell nuclear reactors to Iran.⁴⁸ Analysing Russia's policy in the Middle East, a commentator in *New Times* argued that the essence of Yeltsin's policy was 'to make it clear to Washington that on some issues Russia would like to act on an equal footing with it'.⁴⁹ She labelled this the 'counter policy', 'a passive mirror reproduction of the policy of another state', arguing that it was harmful because it 'creates tensions in mutual relations' and 'owing to the unequal forces', cannot 'bring Russia success'.

The new element in Moscow's global policy was indeed the willingness to risk tensions with the U.S. in order to advance Russia's national interests. Apart from grand Middle East initiatives, this was also expressed by the Kremlin's re-assertion of its position on the post-Soviet space,⁵⁰ as well as its belligerent

⁴⁵ Sergei Akshintsev, 'Russia is Losing the Armament Market', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 26 April 1994, p. 4

⁴⁶ Interfax, 'Kozyrev on Arms Export', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 1 June 1994, p. 1

⁴⁷ In June 1994, Moscow signed a several multi-billion pound deal with Malaysia and Brazil. Richard Beeston, 'Kremlin's Arms Salesmen Return to the Offensive', *The Times*, 16 June 1994, p. 11

⁴⁸ Anthony Lake, 'Confronting Backlash States', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, № 2, March/April 1994, pp. 45-55

⁴⁹ Marie Silven, 'Autumn Marathon of Russian Diplomacy. Successes and Miscalculations', *New Times (International)*, October 1994, p. 43

⁵⁰ In mid-January 1994, Kozyrev, in a speech to Russian diplomatic representatives in the CIS and the Baltic States, identified the Commonwealth as a vital strategic priority and insisted that his government would defend the rights of the ethnic Russian in Near Abroad by force, if required. *Kommersant Daily*, 19 January 1994, p. 3; Fred Hiatt, 'From Russians, Suspicious of U.S., a New Defence of National Interests', *International Herald Tribune*, 2 March 1994, p. 4

posture with regard to NATO expansion,⁵¹ and its open confrontation on the matter of Bosnia.⁵²

The new rhetoric also appeared in Kozyrev's article published in *Foreign Affairs* in May 1994, in which the Russian foreign minister described mutual trust as a prerequisite for a partnership with the West, arguing that 'if a partnership is built on mutual trust, then it is natural to recognise other rules as well: the need not only to inform one another of decisions made, but also to agree on approaches beforehand'.⁵³ In his opinion, 'it would be hard to accept an interpretation of partnership, in which one side demands that the other co-ordinate its every step with it, while the former retains complete freedom for itself'.

In fact, the substantial modification in Moscow's foreign policy was not just the response to external factors, but rather reflected the change in the correlation of forces within the Russian government.⁵⁴ The failure of Yeltsin's shock therapy struck a blow at radical reformers, many of whom were replaced by the representatives of the old Soviet bureaucracy,⁵⁵ and encouraged the opposition who challenged the government's policy, including foreign policy.⁵⁶ The pressure from opposition parties to pursue a policy independent of that of the U.S. greatly contributed to Yeltsin's 'shift to the right'. As a *New Times* commentator observed, Russian diplomacy 'was not set in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the

⁵¹ President Yeltsin in his State of the Nation Speech to the Federal Assembly on 23 February emphasised that Russia would make no foreign policy concessions, especially on defence and rejected the NATO expansion. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 25 February 1994, p. 2

⁵² In his policy analysis in March 1994, the Russian foreign minister attributed the failure to create a partnership with the West to the 'discrimination of Russian goods on West European markets', the latter's enthusiasm for the NATO expansion and a 'sharp turn' in policy towards Yugoslavia, as it had supported the ultimatum on Sarajevo without consulting Russia. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2 March 1994, p. 4

⁵³ Kozyrev, 'The Lagging Partnership', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, № 3, May/June 1994, p. 66

⁵⁴ Shumilin, 'Saddam Hussein and Kirsan Ilumzhinov Have Seen the Trust of Their Peoples', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 October 1995, p. 1

⁵⁵ Yevgeny Bazhanov, 'Top Priorities of Russia's Foreign Policy', *New Times* (International), October 1995, p. 33

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Kremlin or the Parliament', but rather 'shaped in the rivalry and clashes between the President and the opposition'.⁵⁷

The situation was aggravated by the lack of an effective mechanism for adopting and implementing foreign policy decisions. According to the Russian Constitution, the planning and realisation of foreign policy was the prerogative of the President.⁵⁸ In April 1995, Yeltsin, in an attempt to conduct a unified foreign policy, also signed a decree on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, subordinating it to the head of state, and making it responsible for the co-ordination and control of the activities of other federal offices and organisations.⁵⁹ Yet, the Parliament continued to play an important role in the foreign policy-making process not only because it perceived itself as the defender of Russia's national interests, but more importantly, because it adopted the national budget.⁶⁰

However, in the Parliament itself, deputies were split into an anti-Western majority and a Westernising minority, whereby the former camp played an important part in creating an atmosphere in which 'poorly concealed anti-Americanism and deliberate pitting of Russia's interests against all others, as well as attempts to establish close relations with former Soviet clients' had become important elements in Moscow's foreign policy.⁶¹

In addition, the growing influence of the military-industrial complex that had lost some power under Gorbachov, and the appearance of powerful financial industrial groups (FIGs) as a result of Yeltsin's privatisation policy during 1992-

⁵⁷ Silven, 'Russian Diplomacy in a New Situation', *New Times (International)*, August 1994, p. 39

⁵⁸ Chapter 4, Article 80, Paragraph 3, *Constitution of the Russian Federation*, available online at: http://www.ibiblio.org/sergei/Law/Constitution/R1_4.html, viewed on 24 October 2005

⁵⁹ Vyacheslav Yelanin, 'Russia Will Never Agree to the Role of 'Junior Brother' on World Arena', *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 5 April 1995, p. 3

⁶⁰ Ivan Rybkin, Speaker of the Parliament, 'Parliament and Diplomacy', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 November 1995, pp. 1, 2

⁶¹ Konstantin Eggert, 'A 'Great Power' Foreign Policy is Too Expensive', *Izvestia*, 16 December 1995, p. 3

1994, created a strong lobby⁶² that exercised pressure on the government to conduct a foreign policy that would best serve their interests.

In particular, the military that had substantially increased its power following its intervention on Yeltsin's side during the latter's open conflict with the Parliament in October 1993, henceforth played an important role in determining Russia's foreign policy. This was expressed, *inter alia*, by the appearance of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, published in November 1993.⁶³ The military-industrial complex was ambitious to increase its share in the state budget for greater investment in the maintenance of domestic arms production and the development of advanced weapons technologies. It therefore lobbied for the revival of military co-operation with former Soviet allies around the world and for the return to the international weapons market where Russia could obtain additional hard currency and sell its military-related goods.⁶⁴ Considering Iraq's importance as a Soviet military client, and Baghdad's great military needs following the devastating war with Iran and the unsuccessful invasion of Kuwait, it also demanded the expansion of military co-operation with Baghdad, in a desire to achieve 'guaranteed deliveries' of Russian weapons to Iraq.⁶⁵

Similarly, major Russian business groups desired a reassertion of Russian influence in various parts of the world, as a means of advancing their economic

⁶² Sergei Peregudov, Natalia Lapina, Irina Semenenko, *Interest Groups and the Russian State* (Russian), (Moscow: Izdatelstvo URSS, 1999), pp. 85-90; Donald N. Jensen, 'How Russia Is Ruled – 1998: Informal Politics', *Radio Liberty/ Radio Free Europe Special Report*, 28 August 1998, available online at: <http://www.rferl.org/specials/russia/whorules/politics.asp>, viewed on 6 October 2005

⁶³ Yuri Afanasyev, 'Russia Fails, Again, to Escape the Totalitarian Trap', *International Herald Tribune*, 1 March 1994, p. 7

⁶⁴ Silven, *New Times* (International), July 1994, p. 39

⁶⁵ Shumilin, 'Russian Carrot or American Stick?', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 31 July-7 August 1994, p. 12

interests.⁶⁶ Consequently, FIGs, supported by key figures within the government,⁶⁷ became a powerful driving force for pursuing aggressive policies which at times contradicted the officially stated governmental position. This was particularly true with regard to Iran, where the Russian minister of Atomic Energy, Viktor Mikhailov, with the support from the military-industrial complex and the political élite, bypassed governmental export controls, blocked the adoption of new ones and concluded deals with Iran that contradicted the official Russian policy.⁶⁸ Likewise, large Russian oil companies lobbied for a strong Russian presence in Iraq and more assertive steps in bringing about the lifting of sanctions against Baghdad as a way of securing their position in the Iraqi market and of ensuring the implementation of existing contracts, signed with Iraq during the sanctions period.

At the same time, the Russian Foreign Ministry itself was divided over the conduct of Russian foreign policy, with Kozyrev's pro-Western stance challenged by those who felt that he was not taking into account the country's national interests. While emphasising its position of adherence to international law and support of the international community's decision, the Ministry was also deeply split over the Iraq policy. In some quarters, in particular among the Arabists, like the Head of the Middle Eastern Department Victor Posuvalyuk, the ambition to lift the sanctions against Iraq and restore Russia's close ties with Baghdad

⁶⁶ 'Political Lobbies in Russia', *Business in Russia*, June 1995, cited by Donald N. Jensen, 'How Russia Is Ruled – 1998: Informal Politics', *Radio Liberty/ Radio Free Europe Special Report*, 28 August 1998

⁶⁷ For instance, Viktor Chernomyrdin prior to his nomination as the Premier Minister was the Head of the largest Russian company Gazprom. On Gazprom and its involvement in politics, Vladimir Shelkov, 'Gazprom' – State in the State', *Pravda*, 14 December 1995, p. 3

⁶⁸ Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: a Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*, (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 159

corresponded to the interest of the pro-Iraqi lobby groups in the business and the military-industrial complex.

However, other officials appeared deeply dissatisfied with the involvement of the business lobbies into the governmental policies. They argued that 'we do not intend to build the long-term state policy on the directives of the fuel-energy complex', and emphasised that while 'co-operation with Iraqis in the future is without doubt an advantageous affair, ... we should stop placing the bids on chosen partners in such and such region, as it was in the Soviet times...there should be many points of support'.⁶⁹ There were also those who were highly sceptical about the fate of the Russian contracts in Iraq once the sanctions were lifted, predicting a struggle by the Western oil companies for the Iraqi oil and Saddam Hussein's unwillingness to share the oil profits in spite of his generous promises to Russia.⁷⁰

As a consequence of the change in the domestic constellation of forces, Moscow's policy towards Baghdad was gradually moving away from the initial fervour of being a part of the U.S.-led Western coalition towards reassertion of its own interests. On one side, Russia stepped up its effort at the U.N. Security Council to bring about the easing of sanctions against Iraq. On the other side, it increased its bilateral contacts with Baghdad in the hope of obtaining the Iraqi debt repayment to the earliest possible date and, more importantly for the Russian business groups and the military-industrial complex, securing an advantageous position in the Iraqi market in the preparation for the lifting of sanctions.

⁶⁹ Eggert, 'In the Life of Andrei Kozyrev There is Always Place for Celebration', *Izvestia*, 10 November 1994, pp. 1, 3

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Clearly aware of Moscow's needs and ambitions, the Iraqi strategy was to promise that it would repay its debts to Russia as soon as sanctions were lifted, and to offer Russian companies advantageous contracts for the exploration of oil and gas and for the reconstruction of the Iraqi industry in return for Russia's voice of support.⁷¹ Baghdad's pressure on the Russian government was particularly discernible on the eve of routine reviews of the sanctions regime at the U.N. Security Council, with Iraqi officials visiting the Russian capital in the hope of securing Russian backing.

Before the session of the Security Council on the continuation of sanctions against Iraq on 19 July 1994, Baghdad asked for Tareq Aziz to be received in Russia. President Yeltsin allegedly gave the instruction to agree to this meeting, but feeling uncomfortable receiving Saddam Hussein's envoy on the eve of his trip to Naples for the G-7 Summit, decided to keep it secret.⁷² Consequently, even though the news agencies reported on talks being held between Aziz and Kozyrev in St. Petersburg, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman refused to confirm or deny the visit.⁷³

During the Iraq crisis in October 1994, Baghdad once again attempted to pressurise Russia by sending the Iraqi oil minister Safa Hadi Jawad to Moscow, where he held talks with Russian officials concerning the realisation of a range of joint economic studies. Signifying Baghdad's satisfaction with the Russian position on the crisis, an agreement was signed between the two countries,

⁷¹ Elmar Guseinov, 'Iraq Hopes to Bribe Moscow', *Izvestia*, 13 July 1994, p. 3

⁷² Silven, *New Times* (International), July 1994, p. 40

⁷³ Maksim Yusin, 'Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister's Secret Visit to the Banks of Neva', *Izvestia*, 9 July 1994, p. 3

providing for the 'initiation of technical studies aimed at implementing economic projects and developing oil resources'.⁷⁴

Another strategy used by Baghdad was to exploit tensions between Russia and the West in an attempt to split the anti-Iraq coalition. Not surprising therefore that Tareq Aziz was sent to Moscow on his third 'unscheduled' visit to the Russian capital in the previous four months, to deliver personally a letter with undisclosed content from Saddam Hussein to the Russian leadership in the immediate aftermath of Yeltsin's 'cold peace' speech⁷⁵ at the Conference for Security in Europe (CSCE) Summit in Budapest on 5 December 1994.⁷⁶ In this speech, the Russian President, speaking about NATO's eastward expansion, warned that Europe was in danger of 'plunging into a Cold Peace'.⁷⁷ On the eve of the visit, the Russian Foreign Ministry, in explaining the Russian strategy, substituted its argument of Iraqi debt repayment as a reason for increased co-operation with Iraq, by greater emphasis on another argument, namely the need to gain a foothold in the Iraqi market before sanctions were lifted to prevent being overrun by the Western firms.⁷⁸ Following the talks, Aziz declared that 'the Iraqi leadership trusts Russia to defend its interests', and Kozyrev added that the 'U.N. Security Council ought to be flexible and not a hammer to satisfy political demands of such and such countries'.⁷⁹

In the light of Russia's interests in Iraq, it appears that the use of contracts by the Iraqi regime throughout the sanction period indeed proved an effective tool

⁷⁴ Anatol Lieven, Michael Binyon, 'Russia Forges New Economic Ties with Iraq', *The Times*, 19 October 1994, p. 10

⁷⁵ ITAR-TASS, 'Opening of the Meeting CSCE', *Pravda*, 5 December 1994, p. 3

⁷⁶ Guseinov, 'Saddam Hussein's Envoy Knows When to Come to Moscow', *Izvestia*, 8 December 1994, p. 3

⁷⁷ Andrew Marshall, 'Russia Warns NATO of 'Cold Peace'', *The Independent*, 6 December 1994, p. 1

⁷⁸ Guseinov, *Izvestia*, 8 December 1994, p. 3

⁷⁹ K.K., 'Tareq Aziz Again in Moscow', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 11-18 December 1994, p. 12

in undermining the support to the sanctions regime and in driving a wedge between Security Council members.⁸⁰ Baghdad's strategy was explained by the Iraqi Ambassador to Paris and Head of the Baath Party, Abdul Rezak al-Hashimi, who declared: 'Any country that helps Iraq now will gain when the time comes to award contracts. When you are in a jam and someone helps you, you help them back. Those, like Britain and America, who insist on making us suffer today, will pay in the future, that is for sure.'⁸¹

Certainly, Russia was eager to be among those countries who 'gained' when it came to awarding future contracts. The Russian government therefore facilitated contacts between Russian companies and the Iraqi government in an effort to sign as many deals as possible before the lifting of sanctions, and more importantly, before the Iraqi market was flooded with much-feared competition from Western companies. In August 1993, the Russian government signed a major agreement with Iraq on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation that provided for the development and deepening of co-operation between the Russian and Iraqi companies, the realisation of joint projects, the modernisation and expansion of the industrial sector with Russian assistance, as well as the creation of favourable conditions for the conclusion of long-term contracts between the two countries. This agreement provided a broad framework for Russian-Iraqi co-operation in the subsequent years.⁸²

For the purpose of control over the fulfilment of the Agreement, the document also provided for the establishment of a joint Russian-Iraqi Commission

⁸⁰ Beeston, 'Foreigners Scramble to Win Future Iraqi Deals', *The Times*, 21 October 1994, p. 16

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation, signed in Baghdad on 5 August 1993, For full text, see Appendix A

on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation,⁸³ which was created by a corresponding separate agreement signed on the same day.⁸⁴ The Commission had the task of 'helping restoring Russia's relations to Iraq to their previous level, add a new dynamic to bilateral co-operation and define its character and prospects' for the post-sanction period.⁸⁵ It was composed of both Russian and Iraqi representatives and intended to hold alternate meetings in both Russia and in Iraq.⁸⁶

At the first meeting of the Commission in Moscow in September 1994, the Iraqi Minister of Trade, Mohammed Saleh, expressed gratitude to the Russian side for its efforts in bringing about the lifting of sanctions. He also reiterated Iraq's guarantee for the repayment of its debts to Russia in full, and emphasised that Baghdad hoped that 'Russia will continue to play the role of one of Iraq's main partners in the future'.⁸⁷

The same month, Russia signed a Protocol on Trade and Economic Co-operation with Iraq, which stipulated that immediately after the lifting of sanctions, Baghdad guaranteed Moscow the immediate and first-priority repayment of its accumulated debts and would conclude contracts with Russian firms for the construction of industrial facilities and the delivery of goods and equipment valued at US\$8-\$10 billion.⁸⁸

⁸³ Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation, Article 13, Appendix A

⁸⁴ Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq on the Establishment of a Russian-Iraqi Commission on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation, signed in Baghdad 5 August 1993, for full text see Appendix B

⁸⁵ 'Russia and Iraq Prepare for Lifting of Sanctions', *Segodnya*, 9 September 1994, p. 3

⁸⁶ Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq on the Establishment of a Russian-Iraqi Commission on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation, Article 3, Appendix B

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Guseinov, 'Prestige in Exchange for Billions', *Izvestia*, 15 September 1994, p. 1

This 'package' was allegedly presented to the Russian government by Tareq Aziz during his earlier meeting with Kozyrev in St. Petersburg and was rapidly translated into an official document.⁸⁹ Commenting on the protocol, a high-ranking Russian Foreign Ministry official argued that 'things are moving in the direction of lifting of sanctions...and we have to be ready to return to the Iraqi market'.⁹⁰ However, whereas the official Iraqi press reported that the agreement meant the instant start to the contracts, Moscow denied immediate involvement.⁹¹ Commenting on the agreement, a Russian commentator described the signature of the document as the 'biggest success of Iraqi diplomacy since the Gulf War' and the 'result of years of effort by the pro-Iraqi lobby in the top echelons of Russian politics, which had never got tired of pointing out the benefits for Russia from co-operation with Iraq'.⁹²

Two months earlier, in July 1994, a Russian official delegation visited Iraq to discuss the development and reconstruction of three of the country's largest oil fields on the basis of production sharing contracts.⁹³ A month later, an agreement was reached for a project involving US\$2.3 billion of work on those fields. Reflecting the conflicting interests of Russian business groups and official governmental policy, the Interfax news agency suggested that work could begin before the lifting of sanctions, while the Russian deputy foreign minister Boris Kolokolov noted that Iraq had to recognise Kuwait's independence and borders,

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Black, 'Iraq Rebuffs Policy Shift That Would End Sanctions', *The Guardian*, 14 September 1994, p. 11

⁹² Guseinov, *Izvestia*, 15 September 1994, p. 1

⁹³ Rustam Narzikulov, 'Russia is Prepared to Extract Oil in Iraq Before the Embargo is Lifted', *Segodnya*, 4 August 1994, p. 1

as well as provide full information about missing Kuwaitis before sanctions could be lifted.⁹⁴

In anticipation of a possible lifting of sanctions, large Russian oil companies LUKoil, Mashinimport and Zarubezhneft formed a consortium in the winter of 1994 to develop potential projects with Iraq.⁹⁵ Determined to secure the contract to develop the largest Iraqi oil fields, they had engaged in negotiations with the Iraqi officials over an extended period, with LUKoil reported to be willing to negotiate initial investments of US\$800 million to US\$1 billion to exploit the West Qurna and northern Rumaila oil fields in northern Iraq.⁹⁶

In November 1994, in a follow-up to the St. Petersburg meeting with Aziz, and probably as a reward for Russia's position during the October crisis, Kozyrev signed a large arms and military equipment contract with Iraq, which provided for Russia's delivery of heavy equipment to replace armour, air defence and radar systems to Iraq destroyed during the Gulf War, as well as for modernising Iraqi military forces and re-building air-bases. As part of the deal, groups of Iraqi officers from the Air Defence Corps were to be trained in Russia for work on communications and signal intelligence. More importantly for Russia, Baghdad agreed to give Moscow a 'preferential trade status and priority payment' before other suppliers, and promised to start payments for new contracts as soon as U.N. sanctions were lifted.⁹⁷

While the expansion of Russia's co-operation with Iraq was regarded as a success within Russian business circles and on the part of the political élite

⁹⁴ 'Impatient Russia Keen to Repair Iraqi Oilfields', *The Guardian*, 4 August 1994, p. 10

⁹⁵ On the domestic restructuring of the oil sector, Ella Akerman, 'The Development of the Oil and Gas Industries in Russia', in Leo McCann (ed.), *Russian Transformations*, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 116-117

⁹⁶ John Thornhill, 'Russians Prepare for Iraqi Oil Trade Go-Ahead', *Financial Times*, 12 September 1994, p. 4

⁹⁷ Adel Darwish, 'Moscow Poised to Rearm Iraqis', *The Independent*, 19 December 1994, p. 10

determined to revive ties with this former Soviet ally, it was viewed with suspicion by those in the political establishment concerned that friendship with Baghdad might affect Russia's international prestige and its relations with the West, in particular the U.S. Commenting on Moscow's policy toward Iraq, a Russian political analyst argued that economic considerations should not 'act as pointers in the development of a long-term Middle Eastern strategy', but just as one element in the Russia's regional policy.⁹⁸ In her opinion, Russia's manoeuvring with regard to Iraq had both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, the creation of a region security system would be impossible within Iraq's recognition of Kuwait's sovereignty. On the negative side, Russia's return to the Middle East primarily through the development of ties with Baghdad created suspicion on the part of its neighbours. She concluded that it was important that Moscow did not turn into Baghdad's advocate and emphasised the need for the diversification of Moscow's ties with other Middle Eastern countries to balance its relations with Iraq.

Similarly, another commentator argued that saving the Iraqi regime would worsen Russia's relations with the West. He concluded that in the final analysis that was exactly what the Russian opposition was striving for, 'yet it seems that this goal is being achieved step by step by the politicians of the democratic bent'.⁹⁹

Indeed, Russia's 'too flexible' approach to Iraq was viewed with suspicion in some government circles in the West, but also by the Arab world.¹⁰⁰ This

⁹⁸ Irina Zvyagelskaya, 'The Middle East: Search of a Balance', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 13-20 November 1994, p. 5

⁹⁹ Shumilin, 'What is Hussein to Russia?', *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 16 August 1995, p. 9

¹⁰⁰ Concern for Russian position toward Iraq was expressed at the 9th meeting of the Damascus Declaration in Kuwait in early August 1994. Ivanov, 'Moscow's Actions Worry Arabs', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 August 1994, p. 4. Similarly, at the meeting in Riyadh of the ministers of

prompted a Russian analyst to argue that the consequences of Russia's policy on its relations with other states of the region 'would appear before long not only in the economic, but also in the political realm'.¹⁰¹ It was probably for that reason that Moscow was keen to balance its intensifying relations with Baghdad with increased co-operation with the Persian Gulf states.

In the second half of November 1994, the Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin embarked on a tour of four major oil-producing countries – Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Oman, aimed at reducing suspicion among Gulf states about Moscow's deepening relations with Baghdad and at advancing Russian economic interests in the region. However, while an agreement was signed with Saudi Arabia to increase investment and trade, opening the path for specific deals on trade, economic, culture and technology,¹⁰² the economic content of Chernomyrdin's trip was overshadowed by the efforts to justify Russia's position with regard to Iraq.¹⁰³

Moscow also focused on expanding bilateral ties with Iraq's immediate neighbour Kuwait with which the USSR had established diplomatic relations in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis. This resulted in the development of advantageous economic co-operation, since the sheikhdom appeared interested in turning Moscow's attention from Baghdad and offering the Russian arms industry an alternative to sales to Iraq. Not surprising therefore that following the end of Russian-Iraqi negotiations on the activation of Russian-Iraqi co-operation,

foreign affairs of the six Middle Eastern oil countries, strong disapproval was voiced for Russia's policy toward Iraq. Ivanov, 'Problem of Sanctions Against Libya and Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 21 September 1994, p. 4

¹⁰¹ Alexander Ivanov, 'Moscow's Actions Worry Arabs', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 August 1994, p. 4

¹⁰² Reuters, 'Saudi-Russian Trade Accord', *Financial Times*, 21 November 1994, p. 4

¹⁰³ Shumilin, 'Why No Breakthrough?', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 27 November-4 December 1994, p. 12

Kuwait for the first time since the collapse of the USSR signed a half million US dollar contract with Russia for the delivery of military equipment as the first step towards large Russian arms purchases.¹⁰⁴

On a political level, during the Moscow meeting with the Minister of Information and a special representative from Kuwait, Saud Nasir as-Sabah, Kozyrev reiterated that Moscow did not intend to modify its position on the need for Iraq to unconditionally comply with U.N. demands. He also rejected accusations that Moscow was engaging in duplicitous diplomacy. Kozyrev stated that Russian 'policy on Iraq has been depicted as contrary to the interests of Kuwait. But the efforts we are making to induce Iraq to take the road of stability serve the interests of the entire region, and consequently those of Kuwait as well.'¹⁰⁵

However, Moscow's attempts to present itself as an impartial power motivated by the interests of the region were unconvincing, in particular when the pro-Iraqi lobby intensified the pressure on the Yeltsin government to change unilaterally Russia's position on Iraq. On 12 November 1994, the Russian government officially complained that 'for various reasons, including domestic ones, the U.S. appears increasingly insistent in pushing through unilateral decisions that are not in the framework of agreed collective action'. Even though the statement was a direct reference to the Clinton's Administration's decision to stop enforcing arms embargo on Bosnian Muslims, Russian officials emphasised

¹⁰⁴ Yuri Selivanov, 'Kuwait is Arming Itself', *Segodnya*, 8 September 1994, p. 4

¹⁰⁵ Irina Grudinina, 'Moscow Rejects Charge of 'Duplicitous Diplomacy' Toward Persian Gulf Countries', *Segodnya*, 16 September 1994, p. 3

that it also referred to Iraq and the U.S. strategy of countering the Russian efforts to soften the embargo on Baghdad.¹⁰⁶

On 31 January 1995, an Iraqi delegation headed by the Speaker of Parliament and an envoy of Saddam Hussein, Saadi Mehdi Saaleh, arrived in Moscow on a three-day visit on the invitation of the Russian Parliament. The delegation was warmly greeted by the Duma and received by the Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin – the first time since the Gulf War that the Iraqi officials succeeded in obtaining an audience with such a high-ranking member of Security Council. As expected, Saaleh found widespread sympathy for Baghdad among the Russian political élite, declaring that ‘in the course of my meetings...the Russian party expressed its readiness to encourage the lifting of sanctions against Baghdad’.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, according to a source in the Duma, mentioned by *Izvestia*, Rybkin told Saaleh that Russia would unilaterally declare that Iraq had met the requirements of the U.N. resolutions and announce that it considered October 1994 to have been the starting point of the six months probation period during which Baghdad had to comply with U.N. demands.¹⁰⁸ At its expiration in March 1995, Russia would then recognise the de facto end of sanctions, thus allowing its companies to start work in Iraq.

Following the meeting with the Iraqi official, Rybkin declared that in the opinion of Russian parliamentarians, Iraq ought to ‘see the light at the end of the tunnel’, and noted that the Duma ought to play a role in eliminating ‘the negative sentiments in Europe that are having an adverse impact on efforts to lift the

¹⁰⁶ Steven Erlanger, ‘Yeltsin Tells Generals: Shape Up Army’, *International Herald Tribune*, 15 November 1994, pp. 1, 4

¹⁰⁷ Beeston, ‘Russia Vows to Pressure U.N. on Easing of Iraq Sanctions’, *The Times*, 2 February 1995, p. 14

¹⁰⁸ Guseinov, ‘Iraqi Diplomacy Scores One Victory After Another in Moscow’, *Izvestia*, 2 February 1995, p. 3

embargo'.¹⁰⁹ In the press, the change in Moscow's stance was explained by the emphasis on 'material' bilateral relations, 'which help to create an infrastructure of real presence' in the Middle East.¹¹⁰ Accordingly, Russia was seeking to become a 'truly necessary partner', 'respected not so much for its military might and great power policy, as for active trade and economic co-operation yielding concrete benefits'.

On 26 February, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, accompanied by a 50-strong delegation, including 20 members of the Duma, paid a return visit to Baghdad to hold talks with the ministries of oil, trade, finance, defence, agriculture and education. During the visit, Zhirinovsky, speaking of the high esteem he held for Iraqi leader, promised to work for the lifting of sanctions and announced that he wanted Saddam Hussein to join a new coalition against the West.¹¹¹

The pressure on the government culminated in a vote by the Duma on 7 April 1995, to place the discussion on the question of the unilateral lifting of sanctions against Iraq on its agenda, apparently in order to force the government to step up its efforts at the U.N. Security Council in support of Baghdad at the forthcoming sanctions review.¹¹² A week later, the Duma initiated discussions on the project of the Federal Law 'On restoration of co-operation with republic of Iraq', which called for Russia's de facto unilateral exit from the sanctions regime against Baghdad. It was argued that the U.S. in 1994, initiated an analogous proposal concerning deliveries to Bosnia and Herzegovina in spite of international actions concerning embargo, considering American interests to be greater than

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Vladimir Titorenko, 'Return to the Arab World', *New Times* (International), January 1995, p. 52

¹¹¹ Christopher Walker, 'Russian Extremist Arrives in Baghdad', *The Times*, 27 February 1995, p. 11

¹¹² Gornostayev, 'If Sanctions Against Iraq were to be Lifted', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 8 April 1995, p. 1

international collectivism.¹¹³ Some Russian parliamentarians therefore thought it right to follow the U.S. example on the Iraqi question, arguing that as a result of sanctions Russia had lost US\$43 billion, and would make a further US\$8 billion losses.

Others, however, pointed out that in case of Russia's unilateral actions, Iraq would not be allocated a quota within OPEC, which would result in the sharp fall of the oil price, affecting Russian oil exports, and end in annual losses of US\$2.5 – US\$3 billion. It was also argued that the Russian military-industrial complex that was interested in entering the lucrative arms market in the Persian Gulf would also lose out from any unilateral Russian decision.¹¹⁴

Even though the latter view finally prevailed, and the law was not adopted, the very existence of the proposal and the nature of the debates in the Duma reflected the growing impatience of the pro-Iraqi lobby with Moscow's official policy. It also highlighted its readiness to pursue an independent policy toward Baghdad even at the expense of the deterioration of Russia's relations with the West and the Arab world at large, which were already strained as a consequence of Moscow's invasion of Chechnya in December 1994.¹¹⁵ The Arab press accused Russia of forming an anti-Islamic triangle, Bosnia-Iraq-Chechnya,¹¹⁶ and the European Union adopted a tough position towards Russia over the issue.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Barbara Crossette, 'US is Ready to Ask U.N. to End Bosnia Arms Ban', *New York Times*, 20 October 1994, p. 12; 'U.S. Bosnian Stance Causes Alarm', *New York Times*, 12 November 1994, p. 2

¹¹⁴ Vyacheslav Nikonov, *Epoch of Changes: Russia in the Eyes of a Conservative* (Russian), (Moscow: RAUT, 2002), pp. 676-679

¹¹⁵ 'The Kremlin Ordered to Block Grozny', *Pravda*, 14 December 1994, p. 1

¹¹⁶ Shumilin, 'Islamic World Accuses Russia', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 18-25 December 1994, p. 13

¹¹⁷ Nina Petrova, 'Foreign Policy Ought to Become Presidential', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 April 1995, p. 1

Moscow, however, blamed the U.S., and in particular the Republican majority in the Congress, for causing trouble with Russia.¹¹⁸ Whereas the Arab and European Union's objections were considered as surmountable, America was regarded as the main obstacle for advantageous Russian nuclear exports, a major driving force behind the much-resented NATO enlargement, and the key impediment on the path of lifting of sanctions against Iraq.

Even though the actions of the Duma were related to the forthcoming review of the sanctions regime at the U.N.,¹¹⁹ another reason for the timing of the proposed law appeared to be the important visit of a Russian delegation led by the Minister of Fuel and Energy, Yuri Shafranik, to Baghdad that took place mid-April, at almost exactly the same time as the vote in the Parliament. At the close of the visit, Moscow and Baghdad signed a major Agreement on Co-operation in the Construction of Industrial Objects for the Petroleum and Gas Industry, which provided for co-operation in the realisation of new oil and gas projects, as well as the modernisation and expansion of a number of industrial projects, listed in a separate attachment.¹²⁰

The agreement granted Russian companies the right to develop the North Rumaila and West Qurna oilfields that were among the biggest in the country, capable of producing about one fifth of Russia's total output, and, more importantly, apart from naming a number of concrete projects to be realised by the Russian side, provided that 'All other objects in the area of exploration and transportation of oil and gas... will be agreed upon by the competent Russian and

¹¹⁸ Bruce Clark, 'Survey of Russia: Back in Game of Nations', *Financial Times*, 10 April 1995, p. 12

¹¹⁹ Gornostayev, 'If Sanctions Against Iraq were to be Lifted', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 8 April 1995, p. 1

¹²⁰ Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq on Co-operation in the Construction in the Area of Petroleum and Gas Industry, signed in Baghdad on 25 April 1995, for full text see Appendix C

Iraqi organisations additionally',¹²¹ thus opening the way for the signature of future advantageous contracts between the Russian companies and Baghdad. The Russian Energy minister asserted that work on agreed projects would begin as soon as sanctions were eased.

In commenting on the agreement, Yuri Agababov, the deputy general director of Zarubezhneft, noted that Russian companies were keen to maintain 'the strategic initiative' before Western companies entered the market 'slowly but surely'. In the Russian press it was argued that even though it was right at the time to support sanctions against Iraq because it meant hope for developing a partnership with the West, 'something that was viewed as compensation of sorts for the loss of traditional markets,' in the final account, it did not pay off, and the 'illusions' were 'replaced by resentment on Moscow's part and its desire to recover what was lost'.¹²²

This was true not only with regard to Iraq, but also Russia's relations with other countries in the Middle East. To balance its apparent tilt toward Baghdad and recover its erstwhile position in the region, Moscow attempted to once again become actively involved in the peace process. In March 1995, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher went on a Middle East tour aimed at reactivating the Israeli-Syrian peace process.¹²³ Even though he gained agreement on the beginning of high-level talks between the two countries, one and a half weeks later, Kozyrev also embarked on a Middle East tour to accelerate the Syrian and Lebanese track of the peace process. The Russian foreign minister promised that

¹²¹ Attachment to the Agreement of 25 April 1995: List of Objects of Co-operation in the Area of Petroleum and Gas Industry between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Iraq, Provision 9, for full text see Appendix D

¹²² Andrei Smirnov, 'The Important Thing is...', *Kommersant Daily*, 17 April 1995, p. 1

¹²³ Ivanov, 'Christopher and the Oil', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 March 1995, p. 2

Moscow would 'brush aside' obstacles facing Syrian-Israeli peace talks and insisted that the difficulties in negotiations 'require an active Russian participation to push them forward'.¹²⁴

At the same time, Yeltsin's envoy in the Middle East, Viktor Posuvalyuk, argued that the important thing was that Moscow succeeded in conducting a Middle Eastern diplomacy without any expense. He falsely claimed that 'If the American funding of the Middle East today is US\$5.2 billion, Russia did not spend a penny.' However, 'this is not explained by the fact that Russia can't pay, but by the high authority and close ties [with the Arab world]'.¹²⁵

Despite high publicity of new Russian initiatives, Kozyrev's tour ended without any concrete results,¹²⁶ prompting a Russian commentator in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* to argue that it was 'not important to reach sensational success, but first of all put a Russian mark in the region'.¹²⁷ On the economic front the trip proved more successful, as it contributed to the revitalisation of bilateral contacts with the countries of the region,¹²⁸ resulting in the signature of co-operation agreements with Egypt, Syria and Lebanon.¹²⁹

In line with its policy directed at regaining its position in the Middle East, Russia also sought to revive ties with another traditional Soviet client, Sudan. In April 1995, a Russian military delegation visited Khartoum, where it agreed to

¹²⁴ Robert Fisk, 'Guerillas Strike Back After Israeli Air Raid', *The Independent*, 1 April 1995, p. 11

¹²⁵ Gornostayev, 'Diplomacy Without Expenses', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 March 1995, p. 1

¹²⁶ Shumilin, 'Concrete Initiatives', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 2-9 April 1995, p. 12

¹²⁷ Gornostayev, 'Example of Classic Diplomacy', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 April 1995, p. 1

¹²⁸ Gregory Karasin, 'To the Middle East – Without Sensations, But Not Empty-Handed', *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 6 April 1995, p. 1

¹²⁹ Agreement with Egypt on Cultural and Scientific Co-operation, 28 March 1995. *Diplomatichesky Vestnik*, №5, 1995, pp. 4-6; Agreement with Syria on Cultural and Scientific Co-operation, 30 March 1995, *Bulleten Mezhdunarodnykh Dogovorov*, № 2, 1997, pp. 63-66; Agreement with Lebanon on Trade and Economic Co-operation, 31 March 1995, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Russian Foreign Policy, Collection of Documents, 1995*, (Moscow: International Relations, 2000), pp. 145-146

resume military co-operation. However, the establishment of contacts with Khartoum appeared primarily as an attempt on the part of Moscow to put pressure on the U.S. in the context of the NATO enlargement, as co-operation with Sudan, one of the poorest countries in Africa, unable to repay its current debts, did not have any financial advantages.¹³⁰

In contrast, co-operation with Baghdad did. That was why, on 5 June 1995, Kozyrev yet again held talks with Tareq Aziz in Moscow, reportedly calling him a 'dear friend'.¹³¹ Even though the nature of the talks remained undisclosed, it certainly related to Moscow's position at the Security Council following the forthcoming report by Ekeus to the Council scheduled for 19 June. This time, however, the meeting was not followed by another economically advantageous agreement with Moscow, but by the signature of a Protocol on Principles of Trade, Economic and Cultural Co-operation with one of Russia's regions, Tatarstan. A month later, the document was transformed into an agreement between Iraq's Ministry of Industry and Minerals and Tatarstan's Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations.¹³² In commenting on the co-operation between Tatarstan and Baghdad, the Russian press suggested that the government of Tatarstan may be acting on behalf of Moscow and would, 'without creating the furore that would accompany similar actions by Moscow,' assume 'the role of a trailblazer'.¹³³

Not surprisingly, Moscow's deepening co-operation with Iraq led to the alienation of the Persian Gulf States, with the exception of Kuwait, which was

¹³⁰ Ivanov, 'Moscow's New Challenge to the West', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 18 April 1995, p. 2

¹³¹ Valeria Sychova, 'Dear Friends Smack of Oil', *Kommersant Daily*, 6 June 1995, p. 4

¹³² Galina Pechilina, 'Kazan is Prepared to Extend Credit to Baghdad', *Kommersant Daily*, 27 July 1995, p. 2

¹³³ Ibid.

eager to establish close ties with Russia as a means of balancing Russian-Iraqi relations. Therefore, the Russian foreign minister used the opportunity to visit the sheikhdom on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Iraqi invasion to allay suspicions about Russia's close ties to Baghdad. On this occasion, the Russian deputy foreign minister, Viktor Posuvalyuk, asserted that Russia was 'doing more work than others to normalise Kuwait's relations with Iraq'. However, he failed to reassure Kuwait, observing that Iraq's 'disarmament file is close to being closed and work on the biological file is proceeding in the same direction'.¹³⁴

Moscow's optimism continued to persist even when the defection of Saddam Hussein's son in law, Hussein Kemal led to the disclosure of more information on hidden weapons. The Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman argued that 'it is unimportant what facts Iraq took into consideration in deciding to lift the previous veil of secrecy on military programmes. In the end, not motives, but the result plays a more important role'.¹³⁵

After a period of intense co-operation between Moscow and Iraq throughout 1994 and the first part of 1995, bilateral contacts somewhat decreased in the second part of 1995 as a result of Moscow's focus on the crisis in Bosnia, and its unsuccessful attempts to prevent the NATO intervention in this part of former Yugoslavia. In addition, the Russian political establishment was preoccupied with the forthcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for 17 December 1995.

Moreover, during that time, Kozyrev who took an active part in dealing with Baghdad, once again came under great pressure not only from the nationalist and communist opposition, but also from the democratic camp that held him

¹³⁴ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 3 August 1995, p. 3

¹³⁵ Interfax, *Pravda*, 24 August 1995, p. 3

responsible for all recent debacles in Russian foreign policy. At the end of September, the Duma adopted the recommendation to dismiss Kozyrev from his post, naming the collapse of the system of foreign policy forecasting and planning as reasons for this decision.¹³⁶ Similarly, during an unofficial exchange of opinions among representatives of the Russian academic élite and the political establishment with the members of the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, blame for Russia's failed policy was placed on the head of the Foreign Ministry. Personnel changes were recommended to strengthen the country's international position.¹³⁷

By the end of October, President Yeltsin himself was showing signs of preparing the ground for the dismissal one of his longest-serving ministers. Speaking at Moscow airport before his departure for Paris and the U.N., Yeltsin recounted that when Kozyrev asked him whether he should accompany him to France and the U.S., Yeltsin replied: 'Come, come for the moment'.¹³⁸

Speculation about Kozyrev's dismissal increased throughout the autumn,¹³⁹ and it therefore came as no surprise, when in January 1996, the President announced his replacement by Yevgeny Primakov.¹⁴⁰ The latter, enjoying broad political backing, 'could do deals with the West' that the former

¹³⁶ Vladimir Trofimov, 'Everything Depends on the Personnel', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 3 October 1995, p. 2

¹³⁷ Karpov, 'Smolensk-Sennaya Square Catches Hell Again', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 3 October 1995, p. 2

¹³⁸ David Hearst, 'Kozyrev Dangles as Yeltsin Plays to the West', *The Guardian*, 21 October 1995, p. 17

¹³⁹ Alexei Pushkov, 'Change of Minister of Change of Course', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 22-29 October 1995, p. 5; Pushkov, 'Russian Foreign Policy', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 16 November 1995, pp. 1, 5

¹⁴⁰ While Primakov's appointment might have been a surprise for Western analysts, Russian newspapers began mentioning the former as a possible candidate already in spring 1995.

‘was too weak to do’,¹⁴¹ and was trusted by the pro-Iraqi lobby to advance Russia’s interests in the region as a whole, and in Iraq in particular.

¹⁴¹ Talbott, *The Russia Hand*, pp. 194-195

Chapter 5: Striving for influence: Moscow's diplomacy on Iraq 1996-1997

Maybe it is not yet visible to everyone, but I feel that the trust in Russia's policy is deepening. The world understands that the latter is emerging from the bad phase, the big problems, and is now aiming at pursuing an energetic and constructive foreign policy. Many countries trust the balanced line we adhere to. We are calling for the unconditional fulfilment of all U.N. resolutions. At the same time, we say that Iraq ought to see light at the end of the tunnel. Not fire, but light.

Deputy foreign minister and special envoy in the Middle East, Viktor Posuvalyuk¹

From his first day in the office, the newly appointed foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov showed himself to be 'un-Kozyrev',² by undertaking his first overseas trip not to the West, but to the former Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine.³ Many analysts therefore predicted that Moscow's position with regard to the Iraq issue would also drastically change because Primakov, a man with the reputation as a 'friend of Saddam', 'would show what he could do'.⁴ Primakov himself, while refraining from openly criticising his predecessor,⁵ emphasised on various occasions that as Russia had not lost the Cold War, it could not allow itself to be 'led' in international affairs,⁶

¹ In an interview with Mikhail Karpov, 'We are not Baghdad's Advocates', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 23-30 November 1997, p. 3

² Alessandra Stanley, 'Russian Diplomacy Gets a Wily Spy and Survivor', *New York Times*, 21 March 1996, p. 8

³ Transcript of Primakov's first press conference on 12 January 1996, 'Primakov starts with CIS', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 14-21 January 1996, p. 13

⁴ Vladimir Abarinov, 'Crisis in the Gulf: Retrospective and Present', *Segodnya*, 20 September 1996, p. 9

⁵ David Hearst, 'Primakov Asserts Moscow's Power', *The Guardian*, 13 January 1996, p. 11

⁶ Interview with Primakov, Alexander Golz, 'Russian Foreign Policy Ought to be Multivectoral', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 2 April 1996, p.3; Yevgeny Primakov, 'Multipolar World on the Horizon', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 22 October 1996, pp. 1, 5

or 'to follow the only superpower [by] trying to obtain admission to the civilised world at any price'.⁷ According to him, the 'philosophy' of Russia's foreign policy was to 'defend national interests, while doing everything to avoid confrontation'.⁸

Under his leadership of the Foreign Ministry, precisely this premise became the main guideline in Moscow's foreign policy in general, and with regard to Iraq in particular. Not only did Moscow exhibit a new assertiveness in its relations with the U.S. due to Primakov's 'old Soviet' style of negotiation,⁹ but it also toughened, albeit unsuccessfully, its stance on NATO's eastward expansion,¹⁰ and continued to develop military and nuclear co-operation with Iran despite Washington's protests.¹¹ It also diversified its foreign relations by strengthening ties with its Near and Far Abroad, in particular China,¹² and moving towards a closer alliance with France.¹³ This new dynamism in Russia's foreign

⁷ Primakov speaking to Leonid Mletsin, *Yevgeny Primakov: a History of a Career*, (Moscow: Zentropoligraph, 1999), p. 325

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: a Memoir Presidential Diplomacy*, (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 194-195

¹⁰ Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, 'The Factor of Force', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 November 1996, p. 3

¹¹ Associated French Press, 'Primakov Reassures Christopher over Supply of Reactor to Iran', *Financial Times*, 12 February 1996, p. 2; John Thornhill, 'Russia Bares Claws over NATO Expansion Plans', *Financial Times*, 7 January 1997, p. 3; Reuters, 'NATO Expansion Draws Russian Ire', *International Herald Tribune*, 21-22 September 1996, p. 2; Steven Erlanger, 'Crumbling Walls: US Effort to Isolate Both Iran and Iraq is Fraying Badly', *New York Times*, 11 November 1997, p. 10

¹² China's president visited Moscow in April 1997, Yeltsin travelled to China in November 1997, James Harding, 'Jiang, Yeltsin to Focus on Trade', *Financial Times*, 10 November 1997, p. 4; In August 1997 China concluded a major arms deal with Russia worth over US\$100 million. Chrystia Freeland, 'Russia Strengthens Chinese Ties with US\$100 Arms Deal', *Financial Times*, 28 August 1997, p.1

¹³ Yevgeny Primakov, *Years in Big Politics*, (Moscow: Collection 'Very Secretly', 1999), p. 222; During President Chirac's visit to Moscow in September 1997, he was awarded the order 'For Services to Fatherland', a decoration not given to any foreign or Russian citizen before. Maksim Yusin, 'Yeltsin's Friendship with Chirac Developing into a Russian-French Alliance', *Izvestia*, 27 September 1997, pp. 1, 3

policy prompted *The Economist* to observe that ‘the main surprise about the Russian foreign policy is that Russia seems at least to be arriving at one’.¹⁴

With regard to the Middle East, Russia succeeded in changing its title from ‘co-sponsor’ to ‘co-chairman’ of the Middle East peace process, not simply to bring the diplomatic lexicon into accordance with the Russian language, but to signify substantial changes in Moscow’s policy towards the region.¹⁵ In particular, Primakov proceeded from the premise that the Madrid formula for a peace settlement needed to be given a new impetus, for instance, by assuring a new more active role for Russia that would boost the country’s international prestige and its standing in the Arab world.

Moscow appeared not to be discouraged even by the failure of its diplomatic efforts in settling the conflict over Lebanon in the wake of Hezbollah’s shelling of northern Israel and retaliatory action by the Israeli army in Lebanon in April 1996,¹⁶ which drew negative reaction from Israel and the U.S.¹⁷ Nor was it disheartened by being left out of the of the International Committee to Monitor the Implementation of the Lebanese-Israeli Cease-Fire Agreement, established by Israel, the U.S., Syria, Lebanon, and France.¹⁸

In an interview, the deputy foreign minister and special envoy in the Middle East, Viktor Posuvalyuk, emphasised that the time had shown that the failure to include Russia was ‘a mistake’, arguing that ‘if it’s a defeat [of

¹⁴ ‘Russia Eyes the World: Under the Guidance of its Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, Russia Has Been Carving Out a Tougher Yet More Pragmatic Foreign Policy’, *The Economist*, 23 November 1996, p. 57

¹⁵ Leonid Gankin, ‘We Have Become Mature Partners’, *Moskovskie Novosti*, 9-16 June 1996, p. 11

¹⁶ ‘Israel Bombs Beirut Office of Hezbollah Guerrillas’, *International Herald Tribune*, 12 April 1996, p. 1

¹⁷ Konstantin Eggert, ‘Russia Wants to be Equal to the U.S. in the Middle East’, *Izvestia*, 26 April 1996, p. 3

¹⁸ Maksim Yusin, ‘Washington No Longer Wants to Share the Laurels of Peacemaker with Moscow’, *Izvestia*, 30 April 1996, p. 3

diplomacy], it's not ours'.¹⁹ At the same time, he claimed that an attempt was being made to prevent Russia from playing an active role in the Middle East. In his view, the situation was a 'paradox': on one hand Moscow was accused of associating mainly with 'rogue states' like Libya, Iraq, or Sudan, and on the other hand, an attempt was being made to hinder the development of Russia's relations with other countries of the region.

According to Posuvalyuk, Russia was encountering particularly tough resistance in the sphere of military and technical co-operation. He argued that, nevertheless, it would be mistake to get out of the profitable Middle Eastern arms market, where Russia had to find its own niche and back up any substantial arms deliveries by a 'substantial' policy.²⁰ Confirming this view, Primakov, in October 1996, embarked on the first of a series of his Middle East tours, visiting Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan.²¹

However, the first real test for the viability of Primakov's new formula for Russian foreign policy was provided by a new crisis over Iraq in September 1996. On 17 August, armed clashes took place in northern Iraq between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) under the leadership of Massoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani.²² While the latter sought logistic support from Iran, Barzani asked Saddam Hussein to dispatch troops to Kurdistan to bring an end to the feuds between the rivalling parties. The Iraqi leader decided to take this historic chance to impose his control over Iraqi Kurdistan. On 31 August, Saddam Hussein advanced his forces into the Kurdish

¹⁹ Gankin, *Moskovskie Novosti*, 9-16 June 1996, p. 11

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Alexander Shumilin, 'Primakov Meets Assad', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 October 1996, p. 2

²² Agence France-Presse, 'Kurds Clash as U.S. and Iran Vie to Spur Peace', *International Herald Tribune*, 28 August 1996, p. 8

territory, occupying the administrative centre Erbil, and executing over hundred members of the Patriotic Union without trial.²³

In response, the U.S. on 3 September, launched a missile attack on the Iraqi air defences in the territory covered by the 'no-fly zone',²⁴ and extended the 'no-fly zone' over southern Iraq from the 32nd to the 33rd parallel, just 30 miles from Baghdad.²⁵ A day later, the U.S. launched a second attack on Iraq aimed at liquidating the elements of the air defence system in connection with Clinton's decision to extend the 'no-fly zone.'

Hours after the attacks, Saddam Hussein in his address to the nation on national television and radio, rejected the validity of the northern and southern 'no-fly zones' and ordered his armed forces to shoot down any hostile plane flying over Iraq.²⁶ Similarly, the Iraqi Prime Minister Tareq Aziz in a telephone interview with the CNN, declared that Iraq would not 'tolerate' the 'no-fly zones', which 'had been used as one of the means for aggression against Iraq'. He argued that the Iraqi military units involved in the assistance operation to the Democratic Party of Kurdistan had returned to their bases several hours before the beginning of the U.S. attack. Accordingly, the Iraqi leadership 'did nothing wrong', but undertook a 'responsible, positive and limited operation to help our people'.²⁷

²³ Steven Lee Myers, 'White House Dismisses Pullback by Iraq as Insignificant', *International Herald Tribune*, 3 September 1996, p. 10; Valery Batuyev, 'Old Roots of the Kurdish Problem', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 18 September 1996, p. 4

²⁴ Vadim Markushin, 'USA Launched a Missile Strike on Iraq', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 4 September 1996, p. 3

²⁵ Craig R. Whitney, 'Raid on Iraq: the Reaction: From Allies, US Hears Mild Applause or Silence', *New York Times*, 4 September 1996, p. 10

²⁶ 'Iraqi Forces Ordered by Leaders to Ignore UN No-fly Zones, Attack on Iraq Baghdad Reaction', *The Independent*, 4 September 1996, p. 9

²⁷ Ibid.

While Britain enthusiastically supported the air strikes, and France accepted the need for some form of Western response,²⁸ Russia objected to the use of force against Iraq. Instead, Moscow considered an agreement between Baghdad and the Kurds concerning Kurdistan's autonomy within the framework of the unitary Iraqi state as the best way for the settlement of the crisis.²⁹

Following the strikes, Mikhail Demurin, first deputy director of the Information and Press Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry confirmed that at the outset of the crisis Viktor Posuvalyuk was dispatched to Baghdad in search for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.³⁰ Furthermore, at a joint press conference on 5 September, the deputy foreign minister Igor Ivanov and the deputy foreign minister Posuvalyuk revealed that the latter had received assurances from the Iraqi Prime Minister Aziz on 2 September that the Iraqi troops that had entered Kurdistan had been ordered to return to their original positions, and were to do so on 3-4 September.³¹ At the same time, the deputy foreign ministers admitted that the Americans who had been in constant contact with Moscow on the Iraqi situation on 2 September, 'indicated that a U.S. strike was inevitable', and accused them of derailing Russia's successful mediation efforts in Kurdistan.³²

Similarly, an informed source in the Foreign Ministry in conversation with a *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* correspondent confirmed that Moscow had expected a show of force on the part of the U.S.³³ Allegedly, it warned Washington against

²⁸ John Lichtfield, David Osborne, 'Unity Among Allies Marks Trouble Ahead', *The Independent*, 4 September 1996, p. 8

²⁹ Markushin, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 4 September 1996, p. 3; Idem, 'Moscow – for the Full-Fledged Autonomy for the Kurds', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 12 September 1996, p. 3

³⁰ 'Tomahawk Blow to Russia's Interests', *Kommersant Daily*, 4 September 1996, pp. 1, 4

³¹ Leonid Velekhov, 'Military Part of Latest Lesson for Saddam Hussein is Apparently Over', *Segodnya*, 6 September 1996, p. 1

³² Ibid.

³³ The U.S. State Department's spokesman, Nicholas Burns, also confirmed at a briefing in Washington that Moscow had been notified in advance of the planned bombardment. Reutov,

the forceful measures, pointing to the dangerous international and regional consequences of a military action. However, the U.S. decision 'to act on its own' was 'an inadequate response to the events in Iraq'.³⁴

Primakov who at the time of the attacks was on an official visit in Switzerland, told a news conference in Bern that he regarded the U.S. military action as largely connected to President Clinton's re-election campaign, by declaring that 'the attacks cannot be supported by anyone except those who put domestic politics, including pre-electoral questions above all else'.³⁵ The Russian foreign minister also emphasised that the attacks created 'a very dangerous situation', which could lead to 'anarchy' in the international arena.³⁶

The Russian Foreign Ministry was particularly concerned about the unilateral decision by the U.S. to extend the 'no-fly zone' in southern Iraq and declared the action illegal. Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov stated that at the time there was neither a sanction by the U.N. to create such a zone, nor a provision in U.N. Resolution 688 to which Washington referred.³⁷ According to Ivanov, the renewed tensions around Iraq raised questions about the consequences of the endless delay in the post-crisis settlement in the Persian Gulf, which could have a negative impact on the Middle East peace process as a whole. According to him, Baghdad ought to see the real perspective of a possible exit from the

'Second Strike on Iraq Confirms that U.S. Thinks it Can Do as it Pleases', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 September 1996, p. 1

³⁴ Dmitri Gornostayev, Alexander Reutov, 'The Kremlin, it Seems, Was Notified in Advance by the White House, but was Ashamed to Admit it', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 September 1996, pp. 1, 2

³⁵ Whitney, *New York Times*, 4 September 1996, p. 10

³⁶ Phil Reeves, 'Cloves Off as Enigmatic Primakov Squares up to West', *The Independent*, 5 September 1996, p. 10

³⁷ Reutov, 'Moscow Against Washington's Attempt to Take on a Role of a Sole Arbiter in Circumvention of the U.N.', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 6 September 1996, p. 1

sanctions regime, but only under the condition of a strict fulfilment of the corresponding U.N. resolutions.³⁸

Similarly, France refused to join the patrolling of the extended 'no-fly zone'. Despite the U.S. attempts to persuade it otherwise,³⁹ the French government in its statement of 9 September declared that the country's participation in 'Provide Comfort' and the 'Southern Watch' was to be limited to the previously set boundaries.⁴⁰

On 5 September, the Russian government issued a statement on the situation in Iraq, which in an unusually harsh tone condemned the U.S. missile attacks on Iraq. In particular, the document noted 'serious concern' raised by the fact that Washington was 'de facto aspiring to the role of the head arbiter, attempting to replace the Security Council, which in accordance with the U.N. Charter has the exclusive right to sanction the use of force'.⁴¹ It rejected the unilateral extension of the 'no-fly zone' in southern Iraq, arguing that 'these actions, creating a dangerous precedent, contradict the international law and are unacceptable'. The Russian government called on the cessation of military actions in Iraq and appealed on all sides to 'reject the logic of force' and 'turn to the path of political settlement'.

Commenting on the U.S. missiles attacks on Iraq, the Russian press echoed the statements of the Russian government and was united in condemning the U.S. military actions, portraying them as an attempt by Washington to impose its global leadership and ignoring Russia's interests. *Kommersant Daily* lamented

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Steven Erlanger, 'Paris Offers Scant Backing but London is Supportive', *New York Times*, 6 September 1996, p. 17

⁴⁰ Ian Black, 'Iraq Crisis: Isolated Allies Sign Mutual Praises', *The Guardian*, 6 September 1996, p. 15

⁴¹ 'Statement of the Russian Government', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 September 1996, p. 2

that 'these days, the U.S. thinks it can ignore Russia and that Russia's multi-billion dollar economic interests can be discarded'.⁴² Another commentator in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* argued that 'once again Washington demonstrated its deep conviction that it can act with impunity', that 'it can undertake any military action in any part of the world against any state that in the White House's opinion is pursuing the wrong policies', and asked dramatically: 'Who will be declared the next villain?'⁴³ Yet another political analyst observed that the U.S. missile attack on Iraq had led to the 'most serious friction' in Russian-U.S. relations in the past year. He argued that Russia had taken advantage of the Iraq situation to highlight its opposition to American aspirations to assume world leadership and had demonstrated its own desire to become the leader of the countries 'unhappy' about the U.S. dominance in the post-Cold War world.⁴⁴

At the U.N. Security Council, Moscow, backed by France and China, refused to support the project of a resolution proposed by Britain on 3 September, which condemned Iraq's invasion of Kurdish territory, called on Baghdad to cease its military actions and justified the American military response.⁴⁵ Speaking about the Russian position, Primakov told journalists in Moscow that such a U.N. resolution ought to be universal, condemning the use of force and demanding the immediate transition to political settlement.⁴⁶ Similarly, the Russian representative at the U.N., Sergei Lavrov, argued that the British proposal 'essentially places new demands on Iraq that are not envisioned in the previous decisions of the

⁴² *Kommersant Daily*, 4 September 1996, p. 4

⁴³ Gornostayev, Reutov, 'Second Strike Against Iraq Confirms that U.S. Thinks it Can do as it Pleases', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 September 1996, p. 1

⁴⁴ Vladimir Frolov, 'Difficult Period in Relations between Moscow and Washington', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 13 September p. 2

⁴⁵ Barbara Crossette, 'Clinton Finds Little Support at the U.N. for Iraqi Strikes', *New York Times*, 5 September 1996, p. 10

⁴⁶ Markushin, 'Washington Regards Itself as a Global Military Government', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 September 1996, p. 1

Security Council adopted after the end of the Gulf War'.⁴⁷ In his view, the draft resolution in question did not reflect the true state of affairs and would not facilitate the settlement of the crisis in Iraq.

Consequently, during a closed-door emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council on 4 September, Russia circulated an alternative proposal of a Security Council statement that expressed concern about the situation in Iraq and the intervention by other countries, which created instability in the region, appealing to all parties to stop resorting to force.⁴⁸ As a result of the division of opinions,⁴⁹ the Security Council was unable to reach an agreement on the matter, and refrained from a public debate over how to respond to the new crisis in Iraq.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, following Saddam Hussein's belligerent declarations in the aftermath of the U.S. bombardments, Iraq engaged in acts of defiance of the 'no-fly zones', for instance, by firing a SA-6 missiles at U.S. jets patrolling the zone over northern Iraq on 11 September.⁵¹ In response, Washington dispatched F-117 stealth fighters to Kuwait, despite Iraqi threats that the emirate would be committing 'an act of war'⁵² and moved B-52 bombers closer to the Middle East in preparation of a new attack on Iraq. The U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry threatened that the planned strike was to be 'disproportionate with the

⁴⁷ 'Dinosaurs with Electronic Weaponry Inflict Second Strike Against Iraq', *Pravda*, 5 September 1996, p. 1

⁴⁸ Gornostayev, Reutov, 'The Kremlin, it Seems, Was Notified in Advance by the White House, But Was Ashamed to Admit it', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 September 1996, p. 2

⁴⁹ ITAR-TASS, 'The Iraqi Crisis Continues', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 6 September 1996, p. 3; Liven, 'The British Project Resolution in the Security Council was Met with Opposition by Russia, France and China', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 6 September 1996, p. 1

⁵⁰ Crossette, 'The U.N. Council Members Negotiate Fruitlessly', *New York Times*, 6 September 1996, p. 17

⁵¹ Brian Knowlton, 'U.S. Bombers Head to Gulf', *International Herald Tribune*, 12 September 1996, p. 1

⁵² Black, 'Iraqi Crisis: Don't Count on Us, Say French', *The Guardian*, 13 September 1996, p. 10

provocations which are made against us'.⁵³ Similarly, President Clinton, at a campaign rally in Sun City, declared that the American determination to deal with Saddam Hussein ought not to be 'underestimated', vowing to do everything to ensure the safety of the U.S. pilots on missions in Iraq.⁵⁴

The prospect of additional unilateral American attacks on Iraq raised concern in both Moscow and Paris about the escalation of the tensions in the Gulf. While Paris implied that Washington could not count on its support, Primakov on 12 September declared that the use of force by any state was 'absolutely unacceptable'.⁵⁵ At the same time, Russia continued to work behind the scenes to diffuse the situation and attempted to persuade Saddam Hussein to halt attacks on the U.S. air patrols.

While Washington continued to deploy its troops in the Persian Gulf, Moscow had indeed succeeded in obtaining Iraq's agreement to show restraint.⁵⁶ Perhaps in order to cement the accord, the Iraqi deputy foreign minister and Saddam Hussein's envoy, Riyadh Qaisi, travelled to Moscow on 18 September to conduct talks with his counterpart Viktor Posuvalyuk. A communiqué issued by the Russian Foreign Ministry noted that during the meeting, the Russian deputy foreign minister emphasised the 'fundamental importance of the Iraqi leadership's decision to stop firing on U.S. aircrafts in the 'no-fly zones', and expressed hope that 'Baghdad will continue to show restraint and composure, so as not to provide a pretext for any escalation of tensions'.⁵⁷ For his part, Qaisi praised Russia's

⁵³ Philip Shenon, 'U.S. is Preparing Bigger Air Strikes on Targets in Iraq', *New York Times*, 12 September 1996, p. 1

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Black, *The Guardian*, 13 September 1996, p. 10

⁵⁶ Reuters, 'Clinton Approves Dispatch of Troops', *International Herald Tribune*, 18 September 1996, p. 8

⁵⁷ Interfax, 'Moscow Urges Baghdad to Show Restraint', *Kommersant Daily*, 19 September 1996, p. 4

efforts to settle the crisis by political means and stressed that the decision by the Iraqi leadership to show restraint remained in force.

During the press conference in the Iraqi Embassy in the Moscow, Qaisi explained the official point of view of the Iraqi leadership on the recent crisis in the Gulf, which regarded the 'aggression committed by Clinton during his election campaign' as 'an act of insanity, disregard for all international norms and a severe breach of the U.N. Charter'.⁵⁸

Interestingly, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* claimed that it had obtained some information concerning the real purpose of Qaisi's visit to the Russian capital, which allegedly consisted in acquiring from Moscow some intelligence data about the composition and capabilities of the American forces in the Gulf, planned U.S. action and the possible development of events in the region.⁵⁹

Despite the Iraqi military withdrawal from Kurdistan, the situation in northern Iraq remained tense. According to official Iraqi sources, Baghdad continued to strengthen its positions in Kurdistan, assisting the DPK and opening the local offices of the Baath Party.⁶⁰ Barzani secretly visited Ankara to meet the Turkish foreign minister Tansu Ciller and the representative of the U.S. Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau and discussed the Turkish proposal to create a buffer zone against the penetration of the Kurdish guerrillas into Turkey.⁶¹ Baghdad declared itself against the plan, citing the inadmissibility of the division of Iraqi territory, and regarding the anarchy in northern Iraq as a consequence of the lack

⁵⁸ Igor Korotchenko, 'Baghdad Accused Ekeus' Commission of Espionage', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 September 1996, p. 1

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Markushin, 'Persian Gulf: Maybe U.S. Will not Use Force, but Demonstrate it', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 24 September 1996, p. 3

⁶¹ 'Kurds Flee Baghdad-Backed Force', *International Herald Tribune*, 11 September 1996, p. 8

of control over the area.⁶² Instead, the Iraqi leadership asked Barzani to sign an agreement on the Kurdish autonomy within the Iraqi state. The proposal was rejected by DKP, one of its influential members in an earlier interview calling the alliance with Baghdad as a 'tactical and temporary partnership'.⁶³

On 10 October 1996, Iraqi Prime Minister Tariq Aziz travelled to Moscow to conduct talks with Yevgeny Primakov on Iraqi disarmament issues, but also to discuss the situation in northern Iraq, where the armed clashes between the Kurdish factions continued. During the press conference the Russian foreign minister declared that Moscow 'did not intend to undertake any sort of mediation at the present time', and expressed satisfaction with the position of the Iraqi leadership 'who have expressed willingness to arrange a meeting in Baghdad between the representatives of Barzani and Talabani'.⁶⁴

However, in spite of Baghdad's efforts to bring an end to the feuds between the KDP and PUK and retain control over the area, Kurdistan became finally divided into two regions administered separately by the two parties. It was only after lengthy negotiations between Barzani and Talabani sponsored by the U.S. that the two parties signed a peace agreement in Washington in September 1998.⁶⁵

If Russia's diplomacy in the Iraq crisis of autumn 1996 crisis failed to prevent the American air strikes against Iraq and to obtain the international recognition for Moscow's mediation efforts, a year later Russia succeeded in

⁶² Reutov, 'Diplomacy Instead of Arguments of Force', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 September 1996, p. 1

⁶³ Steven Kinzer, 'Kurd Leader Says Alliance with Saddam was Just Tactical', *International Herald Tribune*, 6 September 1996, p. 12

⁶⁴ Abarinov, 'Moscow is Satisfied with Iraqi Authorities' Position', *Segodnya*, 11 November 1996, p. 1

⁶⁵ 'U.S. Brokers Agreement between Kurdish Groups', *CNN*, available online at: <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/meast/9809/18/kurds.agreement.01/index.html>, viewed on 6 February 2006

playing a leading role in successfully resolving a new Iraqi confrontation with the U.N. by political means.

Even though Baghdad on the rhetorical level had repeatedly pledged its co-operation with the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with disarming Iraq, in practice the Iraqi authorities since 1991 had consistently impeded the work of the inspectors. Later, Iraq repeatedly claimed that the international inspection teams were not composed of experts, but of American military personnel whose task it was to ascertain the location of the Iraqi air defences and collect information on the Iraqi military forces and security.⁶⁶

When the Australian Richard Butler replaced Rolf Ekeus as the executive chairman of the Special Commission on 1 July 1997, he found himself involved in new controversy over Iraq's compliance with its disarmament obligation and a deepening division at the U.N. Security Council concerning the Iraqi question. Encouraged by the growing disagreements between the permanent members of the Council on the conditions for the lifting of sanctions, Baghdad, in June 1997, initiated a new round of defiance of UNSCOM. Not only had the Iraqi authorities three times interfered with helicopters taking inspectors to the inspection sites, putting their lives in danger, but they had also on three other occasions kept the inspectors outside the facilities to be inspected long enough to remove any suspicious materials.⁶⁷

In response, the U.S. and Britain proposed a U.N. draft resolution imposing additional sanctions against Iraq. New measures included the suspension of the regular six-month sanctions reviews and a restriction on visas and

⁶⁶ Iraq's letter to the Secretary General on 7 September 1996, pointing to a report by Russian intelligence sources. United Nations Document, S/1996/729, *United Nations Review 1996*, p. 238

⁶⁷ Editorial, 'Unrepentant Iraq', *New York Times*, 30 June 1997, p. 10

international travel for the Iraqi officials and diplomats involved in blocking the inspections. However, Russia and France expressed reservation about the proposal.⁶⁸

Only after two days of negotiations, and President Clinton's personal intervention with Yeltsin at the Denver G-7 Summit,⁶⁹ not reported in the Russian press to avoid domestic political backlash, did Moscow agree to vote in favour of the resolution in exchange for a four-month delay in imposition of any new sanctions against Iraq.⁷⁰ The resolution 1115 condemned the 'repeated refusal of the Iraqi authorities to allow access to sites' and demanded them to 'co-operate fully' with UNSCOM. It also suspended the sanctions reviews until Butler's forthcoming report and threatened to 'impose additional measures on those categories of Iraqi officials responsible for the non-compliance'.⁷¹

In late September 1997, before submitting his report on the work of UNSCOM to the Security Council, Richard Butler travelled to Moscow to meet the Russian foreign minister. Interestingly, both Butler and Primakov provided a conflicting account of that meeting in their respective memoirs. According to Primakov, it was the former who 'wanted to talk to us about the state of affairs with the Iraqi disarmament',⁷² while Butler himself asserted to have accepted an invitation from Lavrov to undertake the trip.⁷³ In Primakov's account, the talks concerned the nuclear and missile dossiers, which Russia considered to be ready

⁶⁸ 'US Persuade Nations to Join Plan for Tighter Iraq Sanctions', *New York Times*, 22 June 1997, p. 6

⁶⁹ John M. Goshko, 'After Wooing Russia, U.S. Wins a Victory Against Iraq at U.N.', *International Herald Tribune*, 23 June 1997, p. 2

⁷⁰ 'US Persuade Nations to Join Plan for Tighter Iraq Sanctions', *New York Times*, 22 June 1997, p. 6

⁷¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1115, S/RES/1115 (1997)

⁷² Primakov, *Years in Big Politics*, p. 311

⁷³ Richard Butler, *The Greatest Threat, Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Crisis of Global Security*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), p. 105

for the ongoing monitoring instead of the inspections. Unable to provide any information indicating that Iraq had preserved missile launchers and remaining quiet on the nuclear dossier, Butler, when asked about why he insisted on preserving the inspection phase and opposed the transition to monitoring, according to Primakov, replied that 'it all depends on you reaching an agreement with the U.S.'⁷⁴

In contrast, Butler described Primakov as declaring at the outset of the meeting that 'Russia wants the Iraq problem solved',⁷⁵ and urging him not to be 'rigid', but more 'flexible and understanding'.⁷⁶ According to Butler, Primakov placed the burden of proof of the Iraqi weapons, not on Baghdad, but on UNSCOM, which had to prove that the weapons existed in order to make Iraq accountable for them, thus reversing the provisions of the U.N. resolutions.⁷⁷ He also described that Primakov 'without being asked' told him the motivations for the Russian position, namely the repayment of the Iraqi debts for the supply of military equipment.⁷⁸

Apart from providing diverging versions of the same meeting, both accounts, more importantly, revealed a mutual dislike not only on the professional, but also on the personal level⁷⁹ that was to play an important role in Russia's subsequent dealings with Butler and its calls for his dismissal as the head of the UNSCOM. It also played a role in Butler's perception of Moscow's stance and motivations at the U.N. Security Council and, of what he viewed as Russia's

⁷⁴ Primakov, p. 311

⁷⁵ Butler, p. 105

⁷⁶ Idem., pp. 105-106

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 106

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ However, while Primakov did not openly criticise Butler, but hinted his sentiments in the way he described the meeting, the latter portrayed Primakov's 'attitude as overbearing and somewhat bullying, redolent of the hard-line Soviet techniques I had experiences in previous undertakings.' Butler, p. 106

attempts to exercise influence on the U.N. Secretary General. Interestingly, the government's dislike of Richard Butler was also echoed in the Russian media, which sometimes mistakenly described the head of UNSCOM as being an American national, and accused him of dealing with Iraq in a way that corresponded to the U.S. interests and objectives.⁸⁰

On 8 October 1997, the Security Council discussed Butler's report that acknowledged some progress in the missile and chemical areas, but not on the biological programme. According to UNSCOM chairman, who was highly critical of Baghdad, Iraq failed to provide 'full, frank and final disclosure' of its biological weapons programmes and blocked the inspections. He concluded that UNSCOM could not close the first two dossiers as Iraq did not disclose further evidence and information requested from them.⁸¹

In response to the report, the U.S. and Britain called for the imposition of new sanction to punish Iraq for its failure to co-operate with UNSCOM. Both countries demanded the imposition of travel restrictions on all members of the Iraqi armed forces, police and intelligence services, employees of the Iraqi defence ministry and its military-industrial commission, as well the suspension of the periodic reviews of the compliance until April 1998.⁸² More importantly, the U.S. advocated an automatic application of the new measures in six months if the Iraqi government did not improve its accounting for the prohibited weapons programmes and failed to fully co-operate with UNSCOM.

⁸⁰ For example, Anatoly Shapovalov, 'One Dossier, But a Host of Inspectors' *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 15 January 1998, p. 7; Yevgeny Popov, 'They Threw Away the Peacekeepers' Masques', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 19 December 1998, p. 3

⁸¹ Black, 'Allies Clash over Iraq Sanctions', *The Guardian*, 8 October 1997, p. 12

⁸² Black, 'Question of Sanctions: Britain Backs Call for Move to Punish Iraq', *The Guardian*, 17 October 1997, p. 17

Not surprisingly, France and Russia strongly opposed that proposal. In general, Moscow was against the imposition of any new sanctions against Iraq, as they would limit the motivation of the Iraqi government to co-operate, and ultimately delay the lifting of the sanctions regime against Baghdad. In particular, Russia regarded the incidents of non co-operation by the Iraqi authorities with UNSCOM, listed in Butler's report, as insufficient reason for the immediate adoption of additional measures against Iraq.⁸³ In Moscow's view, new measures ought to be applied, if at all, not against the country as a whole, but those individuals who impeded the work of the inspectors.⁸⁴

Finally, deeply distrusting to Richard Butler, Russia was particularly opposed to the automatic beginning of sanctions, as it would make the application of new measures dependent on Butler's report. Recognising though that some form of response to the Iraqi defiance was needed, Russia circulated an alternative draft resolution which 'using strong language', imposed 'little action' against Iraq.⁸⁵

In contrast, Paris, did not, in principle, exclude the possibility of the adoption of additional sanctions against Baghdad. However, like Russia, France was against placing the burden of determining the imposition of sanctions on Butler alone, thus advocating a Security Council review before putting them into effect.⁸⁶ In turn, Baghdad attempted to exercise further pressure on both Russia and France to avert the adoption of the U.S. draft resolution, by declaring through

⁸³ Butler, p. 92

⁸⁴ Markushin, 'Baghdad is Demanding Justice', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 24 October 1997, p. 3

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Crossette, 'Russia and France Balk at U.S. Plan to Punish Iraq Even More', *New York Times*, 22 October 1997, p. 13

its ambassador to the U.N. Nizar Hamdoon on 16 October, that Iraq would 'cease all further co-operation' with the U.N. inspectors if new sanctions were adopted.⁸⁷

In an attempt to negotiate a compromise with Russia that would preserve the threat while postponing the date for the application of the additional sanctions, the U.S. representative at the U.N., Bill Richardson, on 22 October met with the Russian representative Sergei Lavrov. Despite Lavrov's declaration after the meeting that there had been no change in the Russian position, Calvin Mitchell, Richardson's spokesman acknowledged 'some progress on the language of the text', noting that the technical aides of both representatives were continuing the talks.⁸⁸

The Russian-American negotiations on the draft resolution resulted in a compromise that represented only a 'symbolic victory' for the U.S. and Britain,⁸⁹ and did not receive particular attention in the Russian media. On one hand, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1134 adopted on 23 October with the Russian, French and Chinese abstentions preserved the threat of new sanctions against Iraq as advocated by the U.S. On the other hand, it refrained from providing for an automatic start of the additional measures as demanded by Russia.⁹⁰ The resolution expressed the 'firm intention' of the Security Council to impose the travel ban following Butler's report in April 1998 if Iraq failed to meet its obligations, called for a list of the Iraqi officials who would be subject to the travel restriction to be drawn in the interim and condemned Iraq for impeding the work of the inspectors.⁹¹ Speaking on the vote, Lavrov stated the 'imbalance' of

⁸⁷ Black, *The Guardian*, 17 October 1997, p. 17

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ 'U.N. Unity Weakened by Sanctions Threat to Iraq', *The Independent*, 24 October 1997, p. 12

⁹⁰ Crossette, 'U.S. Fails to Get U.N. Backing to Widen Sanctions on Iraq', *New York Times*, 23 October 1997, p. 5

⁹¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1134, S/RES/1134 (1997)

the resolution as it failed to reflect a number of essential elements of Iraq's fulfilment of its disarmament obligations, as well as failing to mention the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report that stated significant progress in the nuclear area.⁹²

In spite of being 'saved' from the immediate imposition of additional sanctions, Baghdad, encouraged by the recent vote in the Security Council,⁹³ continued its confrontational course with regard to the Special Commission. On 27 October, the Iraqi Parliament adopted a decision to recommend to the Revolutionary Council to freeze the co-operation with UNSCOM.⁹⁴

According to the Russian foreign minister Primakov, Moscow considered such a decision 'absurd' and 'leading to a cul-de-sac'.⁹⁵ Consequently, the briefing of the Foreign Ministry held on 28 October stressed that Russia advocated a strict fulfilment of the U.N. resolutions on Iraq, and declared that Iraq's 'constructive' co-operation with UNSCOM was the only 'true and realistic path' leading to the lifting of sanctions.⁹⁶

However, Moscow's reprimand remained unnoticed in Baghdad, and on 29 October, the Iraqi Revolutionary Council announced its decision to expel from the country all American citizens working for UNSCOM.⁹⁷ The same day, Tareq Aziz in a letter to the President of the Security Council declared that Iraq was ready to resume co-operation with UNSCOM, 'provided that no individuals of American nationality shall participate in any activity of the Special Commission inside Iraq'. He further announced that Iraq would put this provision into effect on

⁹² Primakov, p. 312

⁹³ Martin Woollacott, 'Weapons and Oil Set Fire to U.N. Sanctions on Iraq', *The Guardian*, 8 November 1997, p. 23

⁹⁴ Reuters, 'U.S. Cautions Iraq on Arms', *International Herald Tribune*, 28 October 1997, p. 6

⁹⁵ Primakov, p. 312

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Reutov, 'Baghdad is Choosing Confrontation', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 31 October 1997, p. 1

30 October, demanding the American inspectors to leave the country within a week from that date.⁹⁸ To justify the Iraq's decision not to co-operate with the Commission, Aziz argued that UNSCOM was 'an institution influenced to a large extent by America's hostile policy, aimed at fulfilling its illegal and illegitimate objectives,' and therefore was 'no longer a neutral institution operating impartially and objectively'.⁹⁹

In response, the Security Council in an emergency meeting unanimously adopted a declaration that warned of 'serious consequences' if Iraq did not comply with its obligations, and demanded that Iraq co-operated with international inspectors without any limitations and conditions.

In an effort to persuade the Iraqi leadership to reverse from its confrontational path, the deputy foreign minister Igor Ivanov invited the Iraqi ambassador in Moscow for a meeting, at which the latter was told that Baghdad's decision to limit the activities of the inspectors was considered by Russia as 'unacceptable'.¹⁰⁰

On 30 October, Richard Butler, for the first time since the establishment of the Special Commission, decided to halt all activities of UNSCOM and announced his intention to postpone his visit to Baghdad scheduled for 7 November. At the same time, he declared that the inspectors, including the Americans, would resume their normal work and would remain in the country in spite of the ultimatum.¹⁰¹

While the Security Council was able to reach rapid consensus on a strong verbal response to Iraq's defiance of UNSCOM, the Council members were

⁹⁸ Butler, pp. 91-92

⁹⁹ Cited in Ibid., p. 92

¹⁰⁰ Primakov, p. 313

¹⁰¹ Black, 'Split at U.N. Deters Attack against Iraq', *The Guardian*, 1 November 1997, p. 16

divided over the need for a punitive action against Iraq. Therefore, the informal consultations in the Council on 31 October first considered various diplomatic options, such as the dispatch of a high-level envoy to Baghdad and the extension of the suspension of the regular sanctions reviews.¹⁰² Once again, Russia and France strongly opposed a military solution to the crisis and advocated a political settlement. Primakov, on his tour of the Middle East, declared in Cairo that Russia was ‘against any use of force against Iraq’, and referring ‘some voices, particularly in the United Kingdom’ that spoke about the use of force against Baghdad, added: ‘We strongly object to this’.¹⁰³

On 1 November, the French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin arrived in Moscow on an official visit. A joint communiqué adopted after the consultations considered the Iraqi decision ‘unacceptable’ and called on the Iraqi leadership to reject it in order to allow the work of the Special Commission to continue.¹⁰⁴ The communiqué addressed the issue of the division of the Security Council on the Iraqi problem by stressing ‘the great importance Russia and France attach to the unity of the Security Council on that question’. Furthermore, both countries put forward their preferred diplomatic option by declaring their support for the ‘intention, expressed by the Secretary General of the U.N., to dispatch to Baghdad a special mission of the U.N. to encourage Iraq to co-operate unconditionally’ with UNSCOM.¹⁰⁵

Despite the French-Russian appeal to Baghdad, on 2 November, the Iraqi authorities barred two American members of the inspection team from entering Iraq on an inspection visit. This prompted Butler to issue the instruction to bring

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Paris et Moscou: la décision irakienne ‘inacceptable’’, *Le Monde*, 3 November 1997, p. 2

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

these inspectors, as well as an American member of IAEA, back to the UNSCOM base in Bahrain.¹⁰⁶ When the following day, the Iraqi authorities hindered another inspection on the ground that that team contained U.S. citizens, Butler ordered the cessation of all inspection activities in Iraq, effectively freezing the work of UNSCOM.¹⁰⁷

As a consequence, the Security Council on 3 November unanimously issued a presidential statement, warning Iraq of ‘serious consequences’ if it continued to defy UNSCOM. At the same time, Moscow repeatedly called on Baghdad to reverse its decision and return to ‘normal relations’ with the Commission. Such appeals were made orally and by written messages to Aziz, *inter alia*, by Primakov himself.¹⁰⁸ The latter also asserted that Moscow was one of the initiators of the idea of a U.N. mission to Iraq.¹⁰⁹ According to Primakov, Posuvalyuk conducted a telephone conversation with the Iraqi leadership requesting it to receive the mission,¹¹⁰ which had been appointed by the Secretary General Kofi Annan on 3 November and consisted of three personal envoys – Lakhdar Brahimi, the former Algerian foreign minister, Jan Eliasson, the U.N. Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Emilio Cardenas, the Argentinean ambassador to the U.N.¹¹¹

However, the U.N. mission to Baghdad proved unsuccessful. At the press conference at the conclusion of the trip on 7 November, Tareq Aziz reiterated that the Iraqi government would not reverse its decision and handed the envoys a message from Saddam Hussein addressed to Kofi Annan. Focusing on the

¹⁰⁶ Butler, p. 95

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 97

¹⁰⁸ Primakov, p. 314

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Sanobar Shermatova, ‘Duel with Unpredictable Outcome’, *Moskovskie Novosti*, 9-16 November 1996, p. 5

¹¹¹ Butler, p. 97

misconduct of UNSCOM, it contained a set of demands on the composition of the Commission based on a strict balance among various nationalities, the suspension of the visits to the 'sensitive sites', the replacement of the U.S. U-2 planes by a plane from a neutral country, as well as the demand for the immediate lifting of sanctions due to Iraq's completion of its disarmament obligations.¹¹² At the same time, the Iraqi authorities proceeded with disabling the surveillance cameras and moving suspicious equipment from the sites under monitoring.¹¹³

While condemning Iraq at the U.N., Moscow supported the demands of the Iraqi leadership. On one hand, Russia attempted to obtain an 'adequate' reaction to any positive progress in Baghdad's conduct, and on the other hand it proposed to hold an emergency meeting of UNSCOM to discuss the ways to improve the effectiveness of the work of the Commission.¹¹⁴ On 10 November, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement noting that Iraq's decision contravened the Security Council's disarmament resolutions, and declaring that Russia 'intends to take a firm stand in favour of lifting the restrictions Baghdad had imposed on the U.N. Special Commission'.¹¹⁵ At the same time, the document emphasised that Moscow would firmly oppose attempts to use the growing tensions between Iraq and the international community to justify military action against Iraq. Instead, it envisaged a solution in which the Iraqi leadership would lift the restriction of the Commission's activities, while the latter carried out its work 'without any artificial delays'. The Security Council was to evaluate objectively the progress made in disarming Iraq.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 101

¹¹³ Editorial, 'Iraq Takes Advantage', *New York Times*, 7 November 1997, p. 30

¹¹⁴ Primakov, p. 314

¹¹⁵ Valeria Sychova, 'Iraq Prepares for War but Hopes for Peace', *Segodnya*, 11 November 1997, p. 4

The same day in Beijing, after the Summit meeting between Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin, the Russian and the Chinese foreign ministers urged Baghdad to fully comply with all U.N. resolutions and called on all nations to show restraint.¹¹⁶ A Russian spokesman in reiterating Moscow's position stated that Russia 'wants to express our decisive opposition to using the U.N. Security Council as a cover for military strikes against Baghdad'.¹¹⁷

Indeed, recognising the waning support for its tough approach to Iraq, both the U.S. and Britain,¹¹⁸ while not excluding the use of force, initially favoured a diplomatic solution of the Iraqi crisis. Following a meeting with the Russian foreign minister Primakov and the Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev, British Defence Secretary George Robertson noted that despite concerns of Moscow's conciliatory line towards Baghdad, Britain and Russia had 'exactly the same policy' in demanding Iraq to back down.¹¹⁹ Explaining the U.S. policy, State Department spokesman James Rubin declared that Washington was 'prepared to go extra mile diplomatically if that makes other countries take a firm action, if necessary, later'.¹²⁰ At the same time he admitted that it was 'harder and harder to sustain support as memories of the Gulf War fade'.

However, with the failure of the U.N. mission and the continuing Iraqi defiance of the U.N., Washington and London adopted a firmer stance. While the British Defence Secretary argued that Saddam Hussein ought to not be allowed to

¹¹⁶ 'Russia: Iraq Urged to Stop Hindering U.S. Inspectors', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 10 November 1997

¹¹⁷ James Bone, 'Americans Fail to Win U.N. Consensus on Military Action', *The Times*, 12 November 1997, p. 15

¹¹⁸ Black, 'Iraq Crisis: U.S. Raids Against Baghdad Would Force Blair's Hand', *The Guardian*, 4 November 1997, p. 13

¹¹⁹ Richard Beeston, 'Russia Firmly Supports that Iraq Backs Down', *The Times*, 5 November 1997, p. 16

¹²⁰ Whitney, 'Carrot-for-China Policy Haunts the U.S. in the Gulf', *New York Times*, 9 November 1997, p. 1

flout the world opinion, the U.S. Vice-President Al Gore declared that it was not up to Iraq to decide the composition of the inspection team.¹²¹ At the U.N. Security Council, the U.S. and Britain proposed a draft resolution that declared Iraq in 'material breach' of its obligations, providing a legal formula for a military action against Iraq. In view of their respective positions in the crisis, Russia, France and China objected to this wording,¹²² forcing the U.S. to water down the proposal by mentioning the unspecified 'further measures' against Iraq in case of continuing defiance.

The resulting Security Council Resolution 1137, adopted unanimously on 12 November, imposed new sanctions on Iraq, such as the foreign travel ban on Iraqi officials, cancelled the regular sanctions reviews until April 1998, and reiterated that the sanctions were to remain in place until UNSCOM certified that Iraq was free from prohibited weapons.¹²³ At the same time, the resolution made the lifting of the ban dependent on Butler's report that Iraq had given inspectors 'immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access to any and all areas, facilities, equipment, records and means of transportation which they wish to inspect'.¹²⁴

Even though the U.S. and Britain failed to include a formula for the use of force in the document, they considered military action to be authorised already under existing U.N. resolutions and reinforced by the vague wording of 'further action' against Iraq if the latter did not rescind its order to expel the Americans. In contrast, the Russian representative at the U.N. Lavrov before the vote stated that the projected resolution did not contain any formulations 'that could one way or

¹²¹ *RFE/RL*, 10 November 1997

¹²² Bone, *The Times*, 12 November 1997, p. 15

¹²³ United Nations Security Council resolution 1137, S/RES71137 (1997)

¹²⁴ Crossette, 'Unanimous Security Council Tightens the Visa on Iraq', *New York Times*, 13 November 1997, p. 6

another lead to the adoption of force measures and attempts to use the U.N. to justify them'.¹²⁵ Similarly, speaking to reporters after the vote on 13 November, he argued that any proposal for the use of force had to be approved by the Security Council.

In an unusual agreement with the Foreign Ministry and the President on Russia's position toward the Iraqi crisis, the State Duma on 14 November adopted the resolution 'On the exacerbation of the situation involving the republic of Iraq', in which it echoed the previous Russian statements by declaring that the Duma 'categorically rejects a forcible solution of the international conflict' and 'believes that the use of military force...should be considered only as an extreme last resort'.¹²⁶ The Duma advised the President to take all necessary measures to prevent the military solution of the crisis. It recommended Yeltsin to raise the question of the lifting of sanctions against Iraq at the Security Council, as well as the rescinding of the U.N. resolution 1134. Earlier, reflecting Russia's general attitude to the Iraqi crisis, a commentator in *Krasnaya Zvezda* asked: 'Why not accept the Iraqi demands? Would Washington's authority be damaged if it as a stronger and powerful state showed a gesture of goodwill?', concluding that the 'wisest step would be to give Iraq a chance to light a fire at the end of the tunnel'.¹²⁷

Perhaps with the same questions in mind, the Iraqi authorities turned away the American inspectors on 11 November and insisted that Iraq would not back

¹²⁵ ITAR-TASS, 'Security Council is Preparing a Decision on Iraq' *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 13 November 1997, p. 3

¹²⁶ ITAR-TASS, 'Iraq is not a Firing Range with Live Targets', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 15 November 1997, p. 3

¹²⁷ Markushin, 'Iraq is Expected to Give in. Baghdad Wants to See 'Light at the End of the Tunnel'', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 12 November 1997, p. 3

down.¹²⁸ Moreover, in response to the newly adopted U.N. resolution, Iraq on 13 November ordered the U.S. personnel to leave the country ‘immediately today’, prompting Butler to evacuate all inspectors from Iraq apart from a few instructed to supervise UNSCOM equipment left behind, a decision which was strongly criticised by Russia, France and China.¹²⁹

While rejecting a compromise that would allow Iraq to specify the nationality of U.N. inspectors, the U.S. and Britain on 17 November proposed a joint plan that promised to make more food and medicine available to Iraq and gave further guarantees on the eventual lifting of sanctions.¹³⁰ To assist in the negotiations with the Iraqi leadership, the British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook had a telephone conversation with Yevgeny Primakov discussing a possible Russian mediation, which in contrast to Primakov’s previous shuttle diplomacy was to have a full backing of the Security Council.¹³¹

The British proposal, not reported in the Russian press, reflected the acknowledgment of Russia’s growing role in the international arena under Primakov’s leadership, and in view of Kozyrev’s dubious dealings with Iraq during the previous crisis, was probably an attempt to involve Russia in a joint Western strategy on Iraq in order to prevent a unilateral deal between Moscow and Baghdad that would further weaken the unity of the Security Council. However, Iraq subsequently rejected the Anglo-American proposal because it did not address Iraq’s objective of having the sanctions lifted, with the Iraqi foreign

¹²⁸ Mary Dejevsky, ‘U.S. Presses for U.N. Backing as Baghdad Stands Firm’, *The Independent*, 12 November 1997, p. 14

¹²⁹ Butler, pp. 102-103

¹³⁰ Tom Rhodes, Michael Theodoulou, James Bone, Michael Binyon, ‘Britain and U.S. Make Offer to Ease Sanctions’, *The Times*, 18 November 1997, p. 17

¹³¹ Ibid.

Minister Saeed al-Sahhaf arguing that Iraq was not 'a camp of refugees' that would receive 'small food'.¹³²

A day earlier, the Russian ambassador in Iraq Nikolai Kartuzov received the instruction to forward a message from President Yeltsin to Saddam Hussein, in which the Russian President asked him to 'not only publicly confirm that Iraq does not reject the co-operation with UNSCOM, but also to offer the inspectors of UNSCOM to return to Iraq for the normal continuation of work...in their previous composition'.¹³³ Yeltsin further emphasised that in case of Baghdad's positive response, Russia would undertake a number of steps to obtain the improvement of the work of the Commission, which in case of a constructive co-operation on the part of Iraq, would lead to the closure of the nuclear dossier.

On 17 November, Primakov had a telephone conversation with the Iraqi Foreign Minister al-Sahhaf who informed him that following the discussion of Yeltsin's message in the Revolutionary Council, Saddam Hussein had approved a response to that message that could be brought to Moscow by Aziz.¹³⁴ The latter arrived in Moscow the following day and conducted talks with Primakov, Posuvalyuk and President Yeltsin.¹³⁵

During the negotiations, having expressed dissatisfaction with the work of UNSCOM, the Iraqi Prime Minister first hinted, and after his subsequent consultations with Baghdad, directly declared Iraq's readiness to resume co-operation with the Commission, including the American inspectors, in return for Russia's promise to raise the question of the balanced composition of UNSCOM,

¹³² Black, James Meek, Martin Kettle, 'West Offers Sweeteners to Head off Iraqi Clash', *The Guardian*, 19 November 1997, p. 13

¹³³ Primakov, p. 316

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Reutov, 'Tareq Aziz was Received by Boris Yeltsin', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 November 1997, p. 1

of special provisions for the inspections of 'sensitive sites' and the use of additional surveillance planes.¹³⁶

In specifying Moscow's obligations, the joint Russian-Iraqi statement declared that

On the basis of Iraq's fulfilment of the relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions, Russia, for its part, will energetically work for the earliest possible lifting of sanctions against Iraq, and above all, for putting into effect paragraph 22 of the resolution 687. To this end, active steps will be undertaken to increase the effectiveness of the Special Commission's work while showing respect for the sovereignty and security of Iraq.¹³⁷

A few hours after Aziz's meeting with Yeltsin, Saddam Hussein at the meeting of the Revolutionary Council reviewed the Russian proposals and adopted the 'adequate decision'.¹³⁸ At the conclusion of the talks, Primakov announced that 'a specific programme has been worked out which, we believe, allows us to avoid military confrontation and the use of military methods, and to move towards the liquidation of the crisis, of course, with Iraq fulfilling the corresponding U.N. resolutions'.¹³⁹

Having secured Iraq's concession, President Yeltsin instructed Primakov to meet the American, French and British foreign ministers to discuss the results of the Russian mediation.¹⁴⁰ Consequently, a meeting of the five foreign ministers of Russia, the U.S., Britain, France and China took place in Geneva in the night of

¹³⁶ Primakov, p. 317

¹³⁷ Gornostayev, 'Russia Succeeds in Averting a New War in the Persian Gulf', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 21 November 1997, pp. 1, 4

¹³⁸ Markushin, 'Russian Diplomacy Has a Chance to Show itself', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 November 1997, p. 3

¹³⁹ Reuters, 'Russia Claims Plan to End Iraq Crisis', *Financial Times*, 19 November 1997, p. 6

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

20 November, at which Primakov outlined the blueprint agreed with Iraq for ending the crisis.¹⁴¹

The joint statement issued at the conclusion of the meeting emphasised 'the importance of united efforts by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council towards the unconditional and complete fulfilment by Iraq of all relevant resolutions of the U.N. Security Council'. It welcomed Russia's diplomatic initiatives undertaken in contact with other Security Council members and expressed hope that it would lead to the rescinding of the Iraqi decision.

Commenting on the talks in Geneva, the Russian foreign minister regarded them as a 'great success for Russian diplomacy, the one that is recognised absolutely by everyone'.¹⁴² The same sentiment was echoed in the Russian press that proudly reported on Primakov's talks with Aziz, viewing Russia's mediation as a unique chance to play a 'visible and advantageous role' in the prevention of a military conflict¹⁴³ and as an opportunity to strengthen its positions in the Middle East.¹⁴⁴ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* asserted that 'this success is the first of its kind in the past few years', observing that 'Washington has now been forced to content itself with a secondary role in a play a script for which it had tried to write'.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, the Western press perceived the successful Russian mediation as a 'triumph for a nation that long felt neglected in the wake of its lost empire',¹⁴⁶ and

¹⁴¹ Binyon, 'Crisis Meeting as Primakov Outlines Iraq's Peace Proposal', *The Times*, 20 November 1997, p. 19

¹⁴² Irina Denisova, 'The World Opposes War', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 21 November 1997, p. 4

¹⁴³ Vladimir Lukin, 'Don't Relax', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 23-30 November 1997, p. 4

¹⁴⁴ Reutov, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 November 1997, p.1; Markushin, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 November 1997, p. 3

¹⁴⁵ Gornostayev, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 21 November 1997, p. 4

¹⁴⁶ Reeves, 'Russia Basks in Rare Success', *The Independent*, 21 November 1997, p. 8

a 'reassertion of its [Russia's] right to be seen as something more than an ailing international giant'.¹⁴⁷

Following up its promise to Iraq to support the restructuring of UNSCOM, aimed essentially at reducing the U.S. influence and undercutting the power of Richard Butler, Moscow urged to convene a meeting of the commissioners who provided technical advice to UNSCOM in order to transform the advisory council into a governing body with the powers to provide political direction to Butler. Consequently, at the U.N. close door emergency meeting on 21 November, at which the commissioners reviewed the inspection efforts in Iraq and considered the ways to improve the effectiveness of the Commission, Russia proposed to increase the number of inspectors as a way to broaden the membership of the inspection teams.¹⁴⁸ Supported by China, Moscow demanded Iraq to be declared free of nuclear weapons and nearly free of prohibited missiles.¹⁴⁹ The Russian representative Gennady Gavrillov argued that Iraq was substantially disarmed, and that many of the concerns raised by the commissioners were 'illusory'.¹⁵⁰ However, the UNSCOM commissioners rejected Russia's demands, instead proposing the toughening of the inspection regime, and in a report to the Security Council endorsing the Anglo-American view that Iraq had a long way to go to comply with its disarmament obligations.¹⁵¹

Meanwhile, Washington and London declared that Moscow's promise to work for the end of the sanctions against Iraq did not bind them. The U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Bill Richardson, argued that the U.S. and the U.N. 'have

¹⁴⁷ Kettle, 'Russia Wins the Poker Game in the Desert', *The Guardian*, 21 November 1997, p. 19

¹⁴⁸ Laura Silber, 'Russia Presses Advantage on Iraq', *Financial Times*, 22 November, p. 4

¹⁴⁹ Crossette, 'Russians Press the U.N. to Relax Iraq Sanctions', *New York Times*, 22 November 1997, p. 1

¹⁵⁰ Butler, p. 109

¹⁵¹ Bone, 'Rejection of Russian Deal Sparks Fears of Fresh Confrontation with Iraq', *The Times*, 24 November 1997, p. 13

made no deal, no concession. No carrots have been offered. We are not ready to lift the sanctions until all Security Council resolutions are complied with'.¹⁵²

The U.S. also continued its military build-up in the Gulf. According to the U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, the U.S. had to be 'sure' that Saddam Hussein was serious about reversing his course.¹⁵³ On 23 November, President Clinton in a telephone conversation with the Russian President expressed the gratitude for the Russian efforts, but rejected Russia's call for the easing of sanctions because Iraq continued to impede the work of the inspectors, and cited Butler's report that Iraq continued to block access to suspected sites.¹⁵⁴ In his view, the ultimate judgement about the Iraqi compliance had to be made by the technical experts of UNSCOM, and not diplomats and politicians.

Nevertheless, Russia continued, albeit unsuccessfully, to step up pressure at the U.N. to accelerate the progress of declaring Iraq free of prohibited weapons. When on 24 November, the Security Council planned to issue a letter thanking the Commission board for its report and the recommendations, Russia blocked the letter, demanding the adoption of a longer statement. Moscow proposed to list the Iraqi accomplishments and place the emphasis on the board's requests to the executive chairman, in particular the request for the latter to immediately travel to Baghdad for talks.¹⁵⁵ However, faced with the strong Anglo-American opposition to its proposals, but more importantly, with new tensions related to Iraq's refusal to admit the inspectors, who have returned to the country on 21 November, to the

¹⁵² Black, 'Allies Talk Tough as Russians Persuade Saddam to Back Down Signs of More', *The Guardian*, 21 November 1997, p. 2

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ John M. Broder, 'Clinton Rejects Call by Russians to Ease Sanctions on Iraqis', *New York Times*, 23 November 1997, p. 1

¹⁵⁵ Crossette, 'Russia and U.S. Square Off over U.N. Sanctions on Iraq', *New York Times*, 25 November 1997, p. 6

‘sensitive sites’, Moscow temporarily backed away from its campaign to ease sanctions against Baghdad.¹⁵⁶

Yet, an indication that Moscow still adhered to its promises made to the Iraqi leadership was provided by the deputy foreign minister Viktor Posuvalyuk, who in an interview, when asked about a possibility of another Iraq crisis, replied:

While it is difficult to forecast anything, it is easier to plan our actions. On one side, they will be directed at demanding Iraq to fully fulfil its obligations, on the other side, at giving it signals that show that the international community was not deaf to the progress that was being achieved.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Crossette, ‘U.N. Stymied on Access to Closed Iraqi Sites’, *New York Times*, 26 November 1997, p. 10

¹⁵⁷ Karpov, ‘We are not Baghdad’s Advocates’, *Moskovskie Novosti*, p. 3

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Yes, we can use the right of veto once, and we can use the right of veto twice. And what will happen? This would lead to the fact that other countries would disregard the U.N. and would start acting in circumventing us. What use would it be then to get angry? It is necessary to reach a compromise.

Russia's representative at the U.N. Security Council Sergei Lavrov¹

Even though Baghdad's confrontation with U.N. Special Commission in autumn 1997 was resolved by political means, it was widely recognised that in spite of Iraq's decision to allow the inspector teams to return to the country in their previous composition and resume their disarmament work, the crisis was far from over.² Not only had the recent events highlighted the intensifying disagreements between the Security Council members, in particular the U.S. and Russia, on how to deal with Iraq, but they also demonstrated Iraq's growing frustration with the sanctions regime, and its willingness to initiate new crises to turn attention to the Iraqi question.

Not surprisingly, therefore, while the issue of the effectiveness of UNSCOM and the ways to improve its work was heatedly debated at the U.N. Security Council in the second half of November 1997, Baghdad yet again barred the inspectors from visiting certain suspicious sites on the grounds that it would infringe the country's security and national pride. Already in September, an

¹ Lavrov in conversation with the journalist Leonid Mlechin, quoted in Mlechin, *Yevgeny Primakov: a History of a Career*, (Moscow: Zentropoligraph, 1999), p. 308

² Michael Gordon, 'An Ex-Spy Master Revives Russia's Mideast Influence', *New York Times*, 21 November 1997, p. 17; Martin Woollacott, 'Diplomatic Cloak that Hides the Coming Crisis with Iraq', *The Guardian*, 22 November 1997, p. 23

inspection team, entrusted with the inspection of the Special Security Organisation headquarters, a military unit responsible for protecting Saddam Hussein, was threatened at gunpoint at the site. At the time, explaining the behaviour of the Iraqi authorities to the Commission's executive chairman Richard Butler, the Iraqi Prime Minister Tareq Aziz argued that the building constituted a part of a 'presidential site', which 'for the reason of the national dignity and sovereignty of Iraq', could 'never' be visited by the Special Commission.³ As Butler reported, it was the first time that Iraqi authorities introduced the notion of 'presidential sites', making it clear that that were 'definite limits to Iraq's willingness to co-operate with the Special Commission'.⁴

As the Security Council, faced with this new obstacle to the inspection regime, was discussing how to obtain access to more than 70 sites declared off-limit by the Iraqi authorities, Saddam Hussein in an attempt to exacerbate divisions among the Security Council members and responding 'to the lies and fabrications issued by the American officials',⁵ in a statement broadcast by the Iraqi Television on 26 November declared himself ready to open his palaces to the U.N. officials. He offered 'to invite two representatives for all the countries represented in U.N. Special Commission and five others for each of the permanent members of the Security Council, including experts and ambassadors, and host them in these palaces for a week, or more'.⁶ Whereas Russia would have certainly accepted the Iraqi offer, the U.S. and Britain rejected the proposition, with the

³ Richard Butler, *The Greatest Threat, Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Crisis of Global Security*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), p. 89

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Barbara Crossette, 'Iraq Opens its Palaces (But not to Those U.N. Inspectors)', *New York Times*, 27 November 1997, p. 3

⁶ Julian Borger, 'Iraq Invites U.N. to Palaces', *The Guardian*, 27 November 1997, p. 16

British ambassador to the U.N., Sir John Weston, observing that ‘we are not interested in political tourism’.⁷

Not having obtained the expected reaction to its proposal, and failing to reach an agreement in that respect with Butler, who during his trip to Baghdad argued that he suspected some prohibited weapons to be hidden in these sites, Iraq on 20 December again attacked the executive chairman, accusing him of making ‘unobjective and inaccurate’ statements. In an interview, the Iraqi Petroleum Minister General Amir Mohammed Rashid summarised the problem as ‘looking for a black cat in a dark room, when there is no cat’ and asked: ‘How do you look for something that does not exist?’⁸ At the same time, Iraq threatened to cease co-operation with the Special Commission unless sanctions were lifted within four months, the governmental newspaper *Al-Thawra* declaring that Iraq ‘has lost patience’ with Butler and UNSCOM.⁹

In mid-January, the Iraqi authorities initiated a further confrontation with UNSCOM by blocking the inspections led by Scott Ritter, accusing him of being a spy.¹⁰ In response, the Security Council expressed its support for the Special Commission and its chairman, and endorsed the latter’s proposal to travel to Baghdad to convey to the Iraqi leadership the Council’s views on Iraq’s attempts to limit access to the ‘presidential sites’. Butler also used the occasion to voice his rejection of Iraq’s deadline for the inspections to be completed, arguing that it would make ‘no practical sense’, and that ‘it will end when it ends’.¹¹

⁷ Borger, *The Guardian*, 27 November 1997, p. 16

⁸ ‘Iraq Again Upbraids U.N. Arms Monitor’, *New York Times*, 21 December 1997, p. 15

⁹ Michael Theodoulou, ‘Arms Check Chief Rejects Iraqi Deadline’, *The Times*, 20 January 1998, overseas news

¹⁰ For Scott Ritter’s account of the U.N. inspections and his work in UNSCOM, Scott Ritter, *Endgame: Solving the Iraqi Crisis*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999)

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, at the 5th session of the Barents Euro-Atlantic Council held in Sweden, the Russian foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov, after a meeting with the U.S. Assistant Secretary of States, Strobe Talbott, made a statement, outlining Russia's position on the Iraqi crisis. He echoed the Iraqi demands and called for a proportionate reduction in American representatives in UNSCOM.¹² At a briefing in Moscow on 21 January, the Foreign Ministry's spokesman Gennady Tarasov reported that a list of about 60 Russian experts had already been submitted to the officials of the Special Commission.¹³ Similarly, in an attempt to satisfy Iraq's objections over the use of the U.S. U-2 spy planes for the surveillance of the Iraqi territory for the U.N., the Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev, during a visit to Paris declared that the Russian Air Force was ready to assist the Americans in that task, with the aircrafts and crews prepared for dispatch as early as February.¹⁴

However, in contrast to Moscow's accommodating policy on Iraq, and Russian Foreign Ministry's statement on 26 January that 'all scenarios providing for the use of force' were 'unacceptable and counterproductive',¹⁵ Washington and London maintained their tough approach to Baghdad. They were prepared to consider a military solution 'if the diplomatic approach fails to shift Saddam Hussein's stance',¹⁶ stressing that the 'diplomatic option was rapidly running out'.¹⁷ In fact, a senior Russian official reported in the Arab newspaper *al-Hayat*

¹² Andrei Smirnov, 'Russian Experts Could Get Anti-Iraqi Sanctions Lifted', *Segodnya*, 21 January 1998, p. 6

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Richard Beeston, 'Russians Offer Spy Planes for Gulf', *The Times*, 23 January 1998, overseas news; Vadim Markushin, 'Presidential Sites' as the Main Irritant', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 23 January 1998, p. 3

¹⁵ Phil Reeves, 'Iraq: Moscow Warns Against Using Force', *The Independent*, 27 January 1998, p. 7

¹⁶ Foreign Office Minister of States, Tony Lloyds, speaking to the Commons, cited in John Penman, 'Britain and U.S. Edge Towards Military Actions Against Iraq', *The Scotsman*, 27 January 1998, p. 12

¹⁷ The U.S. State Department's spokesman, James Rubin, cited in Ibid.

that Washington had officially notified the Russian government that it was likely to launch an air strike on Iraq, targeting military units and sites.¹⁸

Concerned about the possibility of military actions against Iraq that would be adverse to Russian interests, President Yeltsin decided to dispatch his special envoy to the Middle East, Viktor Posuvalyuk, to Baghdad to meet top Iraqi officials and the Iraqi leader in an effort to persuade them to back down from the confrontational course. In commenting on Moscow's policy, Foreign Ministry spokesman Valery Nesterushin declared that Russia was 'sticking' to its 'constant line on Iraq; this is unchanged. The issue has to be resolved by political and diplomatic efforts'.¹⁹

Even though the U.S. did not object to Russia sending an envoy to Iraq, it was pessimistic about the Russian mediation, the U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin arguing that 'the issue is not who the messenger is. The issue is the message: compliance, compliance, compliance and no more excuses'.²⁰

In fact, the Russian government was itself aware of the difficulty of repeating its previous mediatory success. In his memoirs Primakov noted that 'in spite of Posuvalyuk's mastery, this task looked more difficult as during the previous negotiations because the issue of 'presidential sites' had not been included into the discussions before'.²¹ In the same spirit, several Russian diplomats in an interview with *Izvestia* expressed Moscow's frustration with Saddam Hussein, who 'in provoking another crisis', 'has very much let Moscow down', admitting that a

¹⁸ Reeves, *The Independent*, 27 January 1998, p. 7

¹⁹ Laura Silber, 'Russia Tries to Head off Iraq Strike', *Financial Times*, 27 January 1998, p. 5

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Yevgeny Primakov, *Years in Big Politics*, (Moscow: Collection 'Very Secretly', 1999), p. 321

search for a compromise 'will now be far more difficult'.²²

On his arrival in Baghdad on 28 January, Posuvalyuk told the Iraqi Television that President Yeltsin was 'deeply worried' about Iraq's confrontation with the U.S., and had sent him with a written message to Saddam Hussein, and instructions to discuss with Iraqi officials how to avert conflict over the inspections.²³ During talks with the Iraqi leader, the latter allegedly expressed his gratitude to the Russian leadership for its efforts to find a settlement of the conflict between Baghdad and the U.N. The Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed as-Sahhaf, speaking to the journalists after the departure of the Russian envoy, considered the visit 'fruitful and successful',²⁴ but no breakthrough was announced.

Consequently, the Russian foreign minister, upon his arrival in Madrid for a meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, while still expressing optimism about a diplomatic solution to the Iraqi crisis, added that he was 'not sure' if Russia was 'able to do anything' to prevent the military action on Iraq.²⁵ Indeed, during the two-hour meeting at the VIP lounge at Bajas Airport, Albright, having received Primakov's report on Russia's mediation, showed herself sceptical, arguing that there was 'no concrete evidence Iraq is negotiating for anything, but delay', and stressing that the diplomatic options were 'exhausted'.²⁶ However, whereas the former emphasised that Washington's patience 'was running out', Primakov at the end of the joint press conference

²² Konstantin Eggert, 'Moscow will be Hard-Pressed to Prevent Another Strike Against Iraq', *Izvestia*, 29 January 1998, p. 3

²³ 'Clinton's Tough Words of Warning for Saddam', *The Herald*, 28 January 1998, p. 13

²⁴ ITAR-TASS, 'Iraq Will not Tolerate Offences', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 January 1998, p. 3

²⁵ Patrick Cockburn, 'Russia is Last Hope to Head off Gulf War', *The Independent*, 30 January 1998, p. 19

²⁶ Eric Ritter, 'U.S. Calls for Military Action in Iraqi Crisis – Russia Sends Diplomats to Baghdad in Bid to Avert Armed Conflict', *The Journal* (Newcastle), 31 January 1998, p. 26

declared that ‘we are a little more patient’,²⁷ adding that it was ‘only the beginning of the process’.²⁸

In line with that policy, Viktor Posuvalyuk, having briefed Primakov in Madrid, on 1 February embarked on his second mediation mission in Iraq, declaring on the Russian Television Station RTR that Russia wanted to do all it could to ‘avoid a military and political explosion’.²⁹ Reporting on Posuvalyuk’s mediation, Primakov asserted that the Russian envoy’s task was to co-ordinate the general format of the inspections of ‘presidential sites’ with Tareq Aziz, whereby the project did not preview the dismissal of UNSCOM or Richard Butler, and did contain all the elements necessary for inspections. According to the Russian foreign minister, Moscow attempted to convince the Iraqi leadership that if it came to a military option, all the positive progress that had been made during previous negotiations was to be lost. Allegedly, Baghdad understood the Russian warnings, and made ‘serious concessions’.³⁰

Yeltsin’s spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky, the following day had indeed surprisingly announced that Saddam Hussein had agreed to let the U.N. teams to inspect eight sites that they had been forbidden to enter on the condition of doing so as representatives of their governments, and not the U.N. and in the company of diplomatic representatives. The Iraqi leader also consented to meet with Richard Butler.³¹ In emphasising the great role played by Moscow in peaceful settlement of the crisis, Yastrzhembsky proudly declared: ‘As a result of efforts by

²⁷ David White, Laura Silber, ‘Patience is Running Out, U.S. Warns Iraq’, *Financial Times*, 31 January 1998, p. 3

²⁸ Cockburn, ‘Iraq Crisis: Take Your Finger off the Trigger, Says Moscow’, *The Independent*, 31 January 1998, p. 13

²⁹ ‘Russia, France and Turkey Try to End U.N. Iraq Standoff’, *New York Times*, 2 February 1998, p. 10

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 325

³¹ Michael Specter, ‘Russia Announces a Deal; Iraq Says ‘No Such Thing’’, *New York Times*, 3 February 1998, p. 8

Russian diplomacy, we can see a clear shift in the position of the Iraqi leadership. This shows vividly that the Russian leadership is right in thinking that diplomatic and political efforts in resolving the situation around Iraq have not been exhausted'.³² He also mentioned Yeltsin's efforts to solve the crisis by conducting 'telephone diplomacy' on 3 February, discussing the Iraq problem with President Clinton for 25 minutes, and speaking to French President Chirac twice.³³

Immediately after the Russian announcement, however, the Iraqi government in a statement read to the reporters, denied that any such agreement had been reached between the Iraqi President and the Russian envoy. The Iraqi deputy foreign minister Riyadh al-Qaisi emphasised that 'no such thing has been discussed.'³⁴ The Iraqi statement in turn led to deep confusion within the Russian Foreign Ministry, with one ministry official admitting: 'I do not know who is lying to whom. But something strange is going on in Baghdad today'.³⁵ Iraq's agreement to allow the inspection of eight 'presidential sites' was subsequently confirmed,³⁶ but the reason for its initial confusion remained unexplained. However, the compromise did not represent a breakthrough in the crisis, as it did not provide for unrestricted and unconditional access to all identified 'presidential sites' as demanded by the U.N.³⁷

Despite the failure to reach an acceptable agreement with Baghdad, Russia's commitment to a peaceful settlement of the crisis remained unshaken, while its opposition to the use of force against Iraq intensified internationally, but

³² Ibid.

³³ Sergei Knyazkov, 'Possibilities of Political Settlement of the Conflict are not Exhausted', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 4 February 1998, p. 3

³⁴ Specter, *New York Times*, 3 February 1998, p. 8

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Vladimir Kuzar, 'Threatening Baghdad, USA is Threatening the Whole World', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 February 1998, p. 1

³⁷ Specter, *New York Times*, 3 February 1998, p. 8

also domestically. The conservative deputy Vyacheslav Nikonov reported that he could not remember a time 'since the fall of the Berlin Wall, [when] events abroad became the main domestic issue.'³⁸ He observed that 'the possibility of the U.S. strikes on Iraq and the death of the civilian population caused such political activism and anger in the political establishment that had not been observed even when thousands of Russians were dying in Chechnya'.³⁹ The parliamentarians postponed the discussions on the most important and heatedly debated domestic issue, the federal budget, and for two days discussed the adoption of a document on Iraq. In this document, they not only condemned any future use of force and called for a political settlement of the Iraq crisis, but also put forward a number of recommendations for Moscow's policy in case of U.S. strikes on Iraq, and most importantly, advocated the unilateral lifting of sanctions against Baghdad.⁴⁰

The irrational conduct on the part of the Duma and the precedence given to Iraq over domestic issues of utter importance, once again demonstrated the special role of Iraq in Russian domestic politics as an indicator of Moscow's international status and an instrument of its relations with the U.S. More importantly, Iraq, as a highly contested issue, not only illustrated the ongoing debates on foreign policy orientation within Russia's political establishment, but also highlighted the generally-felt frustration with Russia's weakness and the loss of its superpower status. Despite its inability to influence the Anglo-American position on Iraq, Moscow wanted to believe that its diplomatic activities and mediation efforts contributed to the resolution of the Iraq crises and advanced Russia's objectives of ending the sanctions regime.

³⁸ Vyacheslav Nikonov, *The Epoch of Changes: Russia in the Eyes of a Conservative*, (Moscow: Languages of Russian Culture, 1999), p. 711

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Kuzar, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 February 1998, p. 1

In accord with the pro-Iraqi mood of Russian parliamentarians, the Russian President on the same day made a statement in which he indicated that Russia was prepared to exercise its right of veto if the Security Council were to vote on the use of force against Iraq. Strongly criticising the American policy on Iraq, Yeltsin, reflecting the rumours printed in the Russian press that the U.S. was planning to use nuclear weapons in Iraq, warned that Washington's actions could lead to a world war:

One must be careful in a world that is saturated with all kinds of weapons. By acting this way in Iraq, he [President Clinton] may run into a world war. He is making too much noise over this, too much noise. These weapons must be handled with care, and no threats should be made that Iraq will be inundated with planes and bombs.⁴¹

Continuing his diplomatic offensive, Yeltsin, on 4 February, also conducted telephone conversations with Chirac and the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, while Primakov talked on the phone to the U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.⁴² Furthermore, in a letter to Albright on 6 February, Primakov argued that the adoption of any resolution on Iraq 'in the period when diplomacy efforts continue' would be 'counterproductive', making clear that Moscow could not support it. He stated that 'concerning the use of force, Saddam knows about it anyway', and informed Albright that Moscow continued to conduct 'active work' with the Iraqi leadership', with Posuvalyuk remaining in

⁴¹ Robin Lodge, 'Yeltsin Fears 'There Will be World War'', *The Times*, 5 February 1998, overseas news

⁴² Specter, 'Yeltsin Says Clinton Could Blunder into a World War', *New York Times*, 5 February 1998, p. 6

Baghdad for this very reason.⁴³

Baghdad appreciated the support of the Duma, and on 5 February, the National Assembly of Iraq adopted a decision to invite a delegation of Russian parliamentarians to visit unconditionally any 'presidential sites' of their choice.⁴⁴ Having accepted the invitation,⁴⁵ 26 Russian deputies accompanied by 120 journalists boarded a Russian plane carrying 15 tons of humanitarian aid to Iraq without having obtained permission to fly to Baghdad from the U.N. as advised by Primakov, and despite deputy foreign minister Ivanov's insistence that a flight to Iraq was impossible at that time. The plane was indeed grounded at Yerevan airport in Armenia after Iran refused to let the plane fly over its territory, providing Vladimir Zhirinovsky, a member of the delegation, with an opportunity to initiate a major controversy and engage in physical violence against Russian diplomatic officials.⁴⁶

In the end, Russian diplomats in Tehran succeeded in securing an agreement on opening the airspace over Iran to Iraq, and reduced the number of passengers as requested by the Sanctions Committee,⁴⁷ making it possible for the deputies to continue their journey to Baghdad. This episode amply illustrated the clash between domestic Iraq sympathisers and Russian diplomats eager to present Moscow's approach to Iraq as balanced to the outside world. It also highlighted the disagreements within Russia's political establishment on the question of Iraq. The Russian deputy Alexander Yavlinsky observed, the situation was

⁴³ Primakov, p. 324

⁴⁴ Vasily Safonchuk, 'Hunters on Ostriches', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 7 February 1998, p. 3

⁴⁵ Robert Serebrennikov, 'Deputies of the Duma Fly to Iraq', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 7 February 1998, p. 3

⁴⁶ Leonid Gankin, Gennady Sysoyev, 'Deputies Don't Make it to Baghdad', *Kommersant Daily*, 10 February 1998, p. 3

⁴⁷ Yuri Chubchenko, 'Zhirinovsky Mounts 'Cabin Storm'', *Kommersant Daily*, 12 February 1998, p. 5

‘humiliating’: ‘a parliament of a great country is sending a delegation, but is not allowed to leave the airport because the decision of its dispatch was silly’.⁴⁸

In the meantime, Yeltsin embarked on an official visit to Italy. Speaking to an ITAR-TASS correspondent on the eve of his departure, the Russian President reiterated Moscow’s position in the Iraq crisis, pointing to the fact that it received support from France and Italy, while Britain was ‘still wavering a little’.⁴⁹ He indicated that Russia ‘brought the U.N. into it’, and that the U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan ‘has taken up the matter’ and ‘has agreed with the Russian position and proposal’. Expressing his optimism, Yeltsin emphasised that Russia would not allow the U.S. to conduct a military operation ‘under any circumstances’.⁵⁰ The joint statement by the Russian President and the Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi published on 10 February, despite the objections of some members of the Italian Foreign Office to its accommodating tone, called for a political settlement of the Iraqi crisis, and echoing Yeltsin’s earlier proposal, advocated a diplomatic mission by the U.N. Secretary General.⁵¹

However, Washington objected to this idea, with Albright in a telephone conversation with Primakov on 12 February considering it too early for Annan to travel to Baghdad, as such a trip would be counterproductive as long as Iraq refused to co-operate.⁵² In her opinion, it was necessary to delay a U.N. mission until the U.S. was convinced that a real solution had been reached. In his turn, Primakov argued that if Annan went to Baghdad with a proposal, there was a greater chance that it could be discussed and accepted by Iraq. In preparation for a

⁴⁸ Gregory Yavlinsky, ‘Duma Appeared in the Genre of Farce’, On the situation in Iraq, article in *Obchaya Gazeta*, 12 February 1998, reprinted in *On Russian Policy (Speeches and Articles 1994-1999)*, (Moscow: Epizentr, 1999), p. 292

⁴⁹ ITAR-TASS, ‘Yeltsin’s Road Also Leads to Rome’, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 7 February 1998, p. 7

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Primakov, p. 324

⁵² Ibid.

possible U.N. mission, Posuvalyuk met with Aziz in Baghdad the same day. In the name of the Russian leadership, he made it clear that the Secretary General's potential mission had to succeed and that Moscow did not see any other solution to the crisis.⁵³

While trying to persuade Iraq to back away from its confrontation with the U.N., Moscow stepped up diplomatic pressure on Washington to show restraint. The Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev, during a news conference in the aftermath of a meeting on arms control and other security issues, warned his American counterpart, William Cohen, that a U.S. military strike on Iraq would undermine efforts to improve military ties between Moscow and Washington, and that the U.S. was moving too hastily towards confrontation with Iraq.⁵⁴ Sergeyev agreed that Iraq must comply with U.N. resolutions, but argued that there were compromises that would not undercut the inspections. He suggested that Russia could provide qualified inspectors to complement the international teams, or offer spy planes to join the American U-2 planes. Reflecting Moscow's concern about America's potential use of nuclear arms, Sergeyev expressed his worry about the possibility of the release of chemical or biological agents by any military attack that could spread to other countries, including the post-Soviet space.⁵⁵ Reiterating Moscow's favourite idea of a U.N. mission and indicating that Russia would continue to press for its realisation, Primakov after the meeting with Cohen declared that 'one should not speak about failed diplomatic efforts and announce

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Steven Lee Myers, 'Russian Official Scolds Cohen on Threats to Iraq', *New York Times*, 13 February 1998, p. 8

⁵⁵ Ibid.

the verdict on this question before the visit of the U.N. Secretary General to Baghdad'.⁵⁶

Kofi Annan was indeed pushing for a compromise with Iraq by lending his support to a plan devised by Russia and France that called for 'white-glove' inspections of the living quarters of the Iraqi leadership.⁵⁷ According to his plan, the U.N. inspectors would be accompanied by Baghdad-based diplomats from member states of the Security Council. In return, Iraq would allow the inspectors unlimited and unconditional access to other parts of the 'presidential sites'. While Moscow informally confirmed that Baghdad was ready to accept the proposal, London signalled its support only if the special arrangements applied to the real presidential palaces within the sites.⁵⁸

At the same time, the Secretary General was consulting with the Security Council members over whether he should go to Baghdad. Whereas the U.S. and Britain appeared sceptical about the purpose of the mission, Russia strongly advocated the idea, and attempted to secure Butler's agreement to the diplomatic accompaniment of the inspectors to the presidential sites. The executive chairman of UNSCOM was invited to attend a meeting between the permanent Council members on 16 February, during which the Russian representative Sergei Lavrov asked him whether he believed that UNSCOM would be able to carry out its activities effectively if the 'presidential sites' were inspected with a diplomatic escort.⁵⁹ Butler replied that 'if the technical capability and responsibility of UNSCOM were preserved', he believed that the inspections could be conducted,

⁵⁶ Safonchuk, 'Annan Will Fly to Baghdad', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 17 February 1998, p. 1

⁵⁷ Butler reported that the French were at some point even discussing the type of clothes that might be worn on those special inspections, the French idea of diplomatic accompaniment subsequently described in the U.N. corridors as the 'white-glove brigade'. Butler, p. 129

⁵⁸ James Bone, Theodoulou, 'U.N. Pushes for Compromise with Baghdad', *The Times*, 16 February 1998, overseas news

⁵⁹ Butler, p. 135

but subsequently wrote a letter to the participants of the meeting refuting his earlier response.⁶⁰

Angered by the latter's change of view, Lavrov wrote Butler a letter in which he rejected the idea of distinguishing between the palaces themselves and the wider areas around them, as advocated by Butler, and stressed that Russia 'cannot accept the idea of abandoning the modalities for sensitive sites, which have been worked out as a practical solution aimed at providing UNSCOM with access, while taking into account Iraq's legitimate security concerns as stipulated in relevant Security Council resolutions'.⁶¹

To Moscow's satisfaction, the Security Council finally agreed to Annan's mission to Baghdad. However, while President Yeltsin in a joint statement with the visiting Chinese Prime Minister Le Peng insisted on a political solution to the Iraqi crisis that 'would ensure Iraq carries out in full the relevant decisions of the Security Council,' Washington continued its military preparations. The U.S. warned that it would reject any agreement with Baghdad that deviated from the principles of unrestricted access to all sites, including the 'presidential sites,' or that compromised the integrity of UNSCOM's work.⁶² On the eve of Annan's departure, Yeltsin forwarded a message to Saddam Hussein, calling for maximum efforts to reach a compromise,⁶³ while Posuvalyuk continued the discussion with the Iraqi leadership to secure Iraqi agreement with the U.N. Secretary General.⁶⁴

In spite of wide scepticism, the Secretary General's mission proved successful in reaching a compromise with Iraq and resulted in the signature of the

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 136

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 137

⁶² Christopher Wren, 'Annan to Go to Iraq to Seek Solution to Arms Impasse', *New York Times*, 18 February 1998, p. 8

⁶³ Primakov, p. 325

⁶⁴ Gankin, 'Iraq Will be Able to Avoid a Strike', *Kommersant Daily*, 20 February 1998, p. 5

Memorandum of Understanding on 23 February between Annan and Aziz.⁶⁵ The agreement outlined Iraq's readiness to provide unlimited, unconditional access to all sites, including the territories of eight presidential sites, as long as the sovereignty, security interests and national dignity of Iraq was respected. The document spelled out the special regime for the inspections of the presidential sites, which were to be inspected by group consisting of high-ranking diplomats nominated by the U.N. Secretary General and the U.N. inspectors.⁶⁶

The same day, the Russian President announced that the Iraqi crisis was 'essentially resolved', and emphasised that Russia from the outset advocated a diplomatic solution of this crisis and opposed the use of force, 'since it would not have stopped with Iraq, but would have covered a larger area, and who knows who else would have been drawn into it'.⁶⁷ Speaking on Iraqi Television on 25 February, Tareq Aziz expressed particular gratitude to Russia and President Yeltsin for Moscow's consistent political support.⁶⁸

While Russia considered the imminent threat of a military action to be over, the closed-door consultations in the Security Council on the project resolution for the realisation of the Memorandum indicated a deep division on that issue. The U.S. and Britain considering the language of the memorandum too soft, insisted on the inclusion in the text of the threat of the use of force in case of Iraq's non-compliance with the Annan-Aziz agreement. In contrast, Russia, France and China advocated the inclusion of a formula that previewed that any military operation against Iraq could only be authorised by a special decision of

⁶⁵ 'In the Last Hours', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 24 February 1998, p. 3

⁶⁶ Full text of the Memorandum in Butler. pp. 141-142

⁶⁷ 'Iraq Crisis Resolved', *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 24 February 1998, p. 1

⁶⁸ Leonid Velekhov, 'Baghdad Wants Peace But Prepares for War', *Segodnya*, 26 February 1998, p. 1

the Council on the basis of a separate resolution. In explaining Moscow's position, Lavrov told a NTV correspondent: 'We consider it not right to threaten Iraq now, thereby putting into doubt the agreement reached by the U.N. Secretary General'.⁶⁹

Even though the Security Council unanimously endorsed Annan's agreement with Baghdad on 2 March by Resolution 1154, without authorising an automatic military response in case of Iraq's non-compliance,⁷⁰ Washington argued that it did not prohibit the use of force, which the U.S. considered to already exist.⁷¹ However, Moscow regarded the resolution as a success for Russian diplomacy, and Foreign Ministry officials considered the formula 'severest consequences' as a political warning rather than the threat of the use of force.

In a statement issued on 3 March, the Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennady Tarasov expressed Moscow's satisfaction with the resolution, as it 'clearly offers a light at the end of the tunnel, by affirming that, with respect to the current sanctions regime, the Security Council will be guided by the provisions of the Resolution 687, including paragraph 22'.⁷² Underlining the importance of Iraq in Russian domestic politics, a group of Russian diplomats who directly participated in the settlement of the Iraq crisis, among them, Viktor Posuvalyuk and the Russian ambassador in Iraq, was nominated for high state awards.⁷³

Having assisted in the political settlement of Iraq's confrontation with UNSCOM, Moscow also stepped up its efforts to expand its influence on the

⁶⁹ Safonchuk, 'After Storm', They Desire a 'Thunder'', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 3 March 1998, p. 1

⁷⁰ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1154 S/RES/1154 (1998)

⁷¹ Crossette, 'U.N. Rebuffs U.S. on Threat to Iraq if it Breaks Pact', *New York Times*, 3 March 1998, p. 1

⁷² Smirnov, 'War in the Persian Gulf Postponed', *Segodnya*, 4 March 1998, p. 6

⁷³ ITAR-TASS, 'Diplomats Were Promised Awards', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 3 March 1998, p. 1

Special Commission. It requested the Secretary General to appoint a Russian co-deputy to Richard Butler,⁷⁴ in spite of American insistence that the Commission was performing effectively and there was no need to change its existing make-up.⁷⁵

At the same time, Sergei Lavrov also asked for a ruling from the U.N.'s most senior lawyer on whether UNSCOM officials were breaking the staff rules when they spoke to the press about alleged Iraqi deceit. The move was perceived at dislodging two Russian inspectors, Nikita Smidovich⁷⁶ and Igor Mitrokhin⁷⁷, who had tense relations with Moscow due to their participation in what was latter described by the Russian government as the 'most aggressive inspections'⁷⁸ in order to replace them with more complaint experts.⁷⁹ Implicitly indicating what was expected of Russian inspectors in Iraq, a Duma deputy, commenting the inspections of the 'presidential sites' in April 1998 in *Sovetskaya Rossia*, argued that Russian diplomats 'showed maximum efforts in assisting Iraq to withstand

⁷⁴ Crossette, 'Russia Seeking Senior Role on Inspection Teams in Iraq', *New York Times*, 7 March 1998, p. 4

⁷⁵ Reutov, 'Moscow's Man in Special Commission on Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 12 March 1998, p. 2

⁷⁶ Smidovich, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of Iraq's missile programme had made him unpopular in Iraq, was described by David Underwood, chief of the State Department's UNSCOM support, as 'the ultimate diplomat'. He was Ekeus' protégé, dating back to the time when they worked together on disarmament issues in Vienna, and worked in a team with Scott Ritter, frequently serving as chief interlocutor with Iraqi counterparts, such as Amer Rashid. Barton Gellman, 'Saddam's Concealment Strategy', *Washington Post*, 11 October 1998, p. 1; Interview with Scott Ritter by *PSB Radio Station*, Series Frontline№ 1714, 'Spying on Saddam', 27 April 1999, available online at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/unscom/interviews/ritter.html>, viewed on 6 June 2006

⁷⁷ A respected chemical weapons expert, author of the much-quoted internal UNSCOM paper on Iraq's chemical weapons, 'Concealment Aspect – Chemical Weapons', *UNSCOM Document*, 20 January 1998

⁷⁸ Colum Lynch, 'U.N. Arms Inspectors Back Down', *Washington Post*, 31 August 2000, p. 25

⁷⁹ Bone, 'Baghdad's Allies Increase Pressure on U.N. to Restrain Weapons Inspectors', *The Times*, 11 March 1998, overseas news

the U.S. pressure' and to 'pass this humiliating procedure of inspections, elaborated within the walls of the Security Council under Washington's dictate'.⁸⁰

Despite Russian diplomatic activities at the U.N., the permanent Council members, during the sanctions review on 27 April, voted to prolong the embargo on the basis of Butler's report that cited 'virtually no progress' over the past six months in the efforts to determine if Iraq has dismantled its chemical and biological weapons programmes,⁸¹ and in spite of UNSCOM's failure to uncover any evidence of the weapons programmes during the inspection of the presidential sites in April 1998.⁸²

Nevertheless, as a result of a positive report by IAEA that declared itself ready to move from the inspections to the long-term monitoring, Moscow and Washington reached an agreement in the Security Council under which the Agency was to submit a supplementary report by 31 July, requiring Iraq to answer all remaining questions about its clandestine nuclear programme.⁸³ Concerning the other disarmament files, it was agreed that Butler be requested to give a 'technical briefing' to the Security Council in early June to assess the work that needed to be conducted before the closure of the dossiers.⁸⁴

After Butler's talks with Iraqi officials in New York and Baghdad aimed at reaching an agreement on the disarmament procedure, Iraq on 16 June agreed to the 'road map' - a two-month work schedule proposed by the executive chairman

⁸⁰ Yuri Nikiforenko, 'Not Found What They Were Looking For', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 14 April 1998, p. 3

⁸¹ Silber, 'U.N. Set to Keep Iraq Embargo', *Financial Times*, 28 April 1998, p. 4

⁸² Valeria Sychova, 'Saddam's Bedrooms are Biologically Clean', *Segodnya*, 4 April 1998, p. 5; ITAR-TASS, 'Iraq is Fulfilling its Agreement with the U.N.', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 April 1998, p. 3

⁸³ 'U.N. Deal on Iraqi Nuclear Inspections', *New York Times*, 15 May 1998, p. 12

⁸⁴ Crossette, 'U.S. and Russia Reach Accord on Weapons Inspections in Iraq', *New York Times*, 14 May 1998, p. 11

of UNSCOM that for the first time outlined the remaining areas of work under each of the missile, chemical and biological dossiers.⁸⁵

Following the supplementary report by the IAEA that noted that Baghdad made no progress in providing information on its weapons designs, uranium enrichment or nuclear exports, Russia on 29 July unsuccessfully tried to put through a Security Council resolution that would declare that Iraq had complied with the demands to liquidate its nuclear weapons programme and was ready to move from intrusive inspectors to long-term monitoring.⁸⁶

Insisting that Iraq was still hiding evidence, in particular on its chemical and biological weapons, Butler travelled to Baghdad at the beginning of August to propose to Iraq an 'accelerated work programme' on the verification and dismantling of Iraq's weapons programmes.⁸⁷ However, the talks collapsed after Tareq Aziz rejected the proposal. He requested Butler to report to the Security Council that Iraq had complied with the disarmament requirements and no longer possessed the weapons of mass destruction, demanding the immediate lifting of the sanctions.⁸⁸

Following Butler's insistence that he had not the 'sufficient evidence to do that report',⁸⁹ Saddam Hussein in an emergency session with senior aides revoked the earlier Annan-Aziz agreement and decided to freeze all co-operation with UNSCOM and IAEA in protest of the ongoing sanctions regime. In a statement, he listed a number of conditions for the resumption of its relations with the

⁸⁵ Roula Khalaf, 'Iraq Hails Deal with U.N. to 'Close Files'', *Financial Times*, 17 June 1998, p. 6

⁸⁶ Crossette, 'Russia Fails to Free Iraq from Intrusive Inspections', *New York Times*, 30 July 1998, p. 7

⁸⁷ Borger, 'Baghdad Talks Collapse', *The Guardian*, 4 August 1998, p. 12

⁸⁸ Theodoulou, Bone, 'Saddam Seeks Showdown on Weapons', *The Times*, 5 August 1998, overseas news

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Special Commission.⁹⁰ In an attempt to diminish American influence over the disarmament work, the Iraqi leader demanded the dismissal of UNSCOM, and the creation of a new executive bureau to direct the activities of the commission and the staff. The new office had to include 'an equal number of members representing permanent members of the Security Council' with a rotating chairmanship and Iraqi participation as observers. In turn, the Security Council was required to 'legally, politically and practically adhere to conditions that will respect Iraq's sovereignty and legitimate rights', including the 'no-fly zones'.⁹¹

In response, the Security Council on 6 August, condemned Iraq for ceasing its co-operation with UNSCOM and demanded that the Iraqi government reverse its decision, but refrained from taking any further action due to the divisions among the Council members.⁹² In particular, Russia questioned the role of Butler in the new dealing with Baghdad, hinting that Moscow wanted his dismissal.⁹³ As Russian ambassador to the U.N. Yuri Fedotov argued: 'Sometimes, when you are in a deadlock, you replace the negotiator'.⁹⁴

Following an August statement that instructed the inspectors to continue their work reporting any further Iraqi obstructions and that made a military threat in case of Iraq's non-compliance,⁹⁵ the Security Council on 9 September, unanimously voted to maintain sanctions against Iraq and to suspend all future sanction reviews until the country resumed co-operation with UNSCOM.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Theodoulou, 'Saddam Revokes Arms Deal with U.N.', *The Times*, 6 August 1998, overseas news

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Crossette, 'Security Council Closes its Ranks Against Baghdad', *New York Times*, 7 August 1998, p. 1

⁹³ Bone, 'U.N. Chief Hoes to Settle Iraq Crisis Without Threat', *The Times*, 7 August 1998, overseas news

⁹⁴ David Osborne, 'Annan Seeks U.N. 'Rethink' on Iraq', *The Independent*, 7 August 1998, p. 13

⁹⁵ Paul Lewis, 'U.N. Council Prepares Mild Reply to Iraq', *New York Times*, 17 August 1998, p. 7

⁹⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/1194 /(1998)

Outlining Moscow's position on the vote, Lavrov explained: 'This resolution clearly speaks for itself. I believe it clearly states that the Council doesn't like the current situation'.⁹⁷

At the same time, the Council declared itself ready to consider a 'comprehensive review' of Iraq's compliance with all the relevant resolutions. This concept was for the first time put forward by the Secretary General in his conversation with Tareq Aziz on 6 August, when the former argued that it was the right time 'to stand back and make a comprehensive assessment of where we are, where we are going and how to get there'.⁹⁸ In October, Kofi Annan presented his proposals for such a review to the Security Council. He suggested that the review be held 15 days after Iraq's resumption of co-operation with UNSCOM and be conducted in two phases, the first focusing on how far Iraq had moved on disarmament, and the second considering Baghdad's compliance with its other U.N. obligations. At the same time, Annan not only proposed that the inspectors ought to provide proof that Iraq had not yet complied with all its obligations, but that Baghdad would also be allowed to make its own presentation to the Security Council.⁹⁹

Essentially, the main question was henceforth not whether Iraq still possessed the weapons of mass destructions, but whether it 'constituted a military threat to the region.'¹⁰⁰ Richard Butler claimed that 'while reflecting the thinking of the Secretary General's senior staff, it was apparent that the proposal had been largely influenced by Russia – and, even further behind the scenes by Iraq'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Crossette, 'U.N. Keeps Sanctions on Iraq, Citing its Balking of Monitors', *New York Times*, 10 September 1998, p. 10

⁹⁸ Crossette, *New York Times*, 7 August 1998, p. 1

⁹⁹ Khalaf, 'Iraq Seeks Details of Sanctions Review', *Financial Times*, 8 October 1998, p. 4

¹⁰⁰ Butler, p. 177

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Indeed, both Baghdad and Moscow favoured the proposal in the belief that a review would demonstrate that Iraq had done much to eliminate its nuclear, chemical, biological and missiles programmes and in return could have the sanctions lifted, or at least modified.¹⁰² In mid-October, Baghdad presented the Secretary General with a list of nine ‘clarifications’ containing demands of how such a review had to be conducted. In a new strategic move, Iraq, having discovered a growing sympathy for the plight of the Iraqi people suffering from the consequences of the sanctions in the office of the Secretary General, henceforth preferred dealing only with Kofi Annan himself.

Similarly, Moscow increasingly relied on the latter to defend Iraq against the pressure maintained by the U.S. and Britain. Russia supported strongly the Secretary General’s proposals, as they fully corresponded to its own ideas expressed during Primakov’s meeting with Butler a year before. Moscow advocated a more flexible approach to Iraq, arguing that any assessment ought to take into account ‘the tremendous humanitarian cost of sanctions and the political changes which occurred in the region since 1991’, and insisting that the Security Council ‘should acknowledge that a certain degree of incertitude [with regard to Iraq’s weapons programmes] was acceptable’.¹⁰³ In his memoirs, Primakov explained that he believed that the conduct of such a review ‘would not only allow the discussion of the fulfilment of Iraq’s obligations, but also set a path for the lifting of sanctions’.¹⁰⁴

Washington and London were also willing to accept the plan, but in the belief that the process would backfire, providing for an opportunity to hold Iraq

¹⁰² Youssef Ibrahim, ‘U.N. Tries to Cajole Iraq Into Co-operating on Arms Inspections’, *New York Times*, 14 October 1998, p. 7

¹⁰³ Butler, p. 177

¹⁰⁴ Primakov, p. 327

accountable for the failure to fulfil a broad range of its obligations.¹⁰⁵ However, they strongly objected to the proposed timetable for the commencement of the ‘comprehensive review’, to the burden of proof being placed on the Special Commission, and more importantly, to Baghdad dictating its rules to the Security Council.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, on the British proposal, the Council members in a letter to the Secretary General on 30 October expressed their intention to remain in charge of deciding the format of the comprehensive review, which was to take place only in case of Iraq’s full co-operation with the U.N. inspectors. Even though the Security Council in that letter agreed to conduct the review in two phases as initially proposed,¹⁰⁷ Washington refused to include in the text the reference to paragraph 22 of the Resolution 687, hinting that the U.S. insisted on Iraq meeting all its other obligations apart from disarmament, before considering the lifting of sanctions.

In response to that letter, but also reacting to the VX nerve gas report by UNSCOM, which concluded that fragments of missiles in Iraq showed the traces of the gas, which was confirmed by independent laboratory in the U.S., Saddam Hussein yet again hardened his stance. On 31 October, he took the decision to ban the inspections of sites already checked and to shut down all the monitoring work.¹⁰⁸ According to Primakov, even though the Russian Foreign Ministry remained in constant touch with the Iraqi leadership via the Russian Embassy in Baghdad and the Russian representative at the U.N., Moscow was not informed of that decision. He further observed that these ‘saltos mortales’ was a common

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Khalaf, ‘Iraq Seeks Details of Sanctions Review’, *Financial Times*, 8 October 1998, p. 4

¹⁰⁷ Crossette, ‘Security Council Outlines New Strategy on Iraq Arms’, *New York Times*, 31 October 1998, p. 7

¹⁰⁸ Khalaf, ‘Saddam Gambles that Divisions in the U.N. Security Council Will Erode Sanctions’, *Financial Times*, 6 November 1998, p. 4

tactic of Baghdad, and that he had repeatedly warned Aziz about the unacceptability of such unexpected moves, 'especially if the Iraqi leadership wanted Russia to continue all efforts to diffuse the situation'.¹⁰⁹

On 5 November, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1205, condemning Iraq for ceasing its co-operation with UNSCOM as 'flagrant violation' of its obligations and demanding that Baghdad rescind unconditionally and immediately its decision of 5 August and 31 October. The resolution also reaffirmed the Council's readiness to conduct a 'comprehensive review' once Iraq resumed co-operation with the Special Commission and the IAEA.¹¹⁰

While discussing the diplomatic options for the resolution of the Iraqi crisis, the U.S. continued its preparation for a military operation in Iraq. Following talks in Europe, William Cohen on 3 November travelled to the Persian Gulf for talks with America's Arab allies over the response to Baghdad.¹¹¹ On 11 November, the U.S. dispatched more forces and warplanes to the Gulf, while U.N. inspectors and humanitarian personnel were suddenly withdrawn from Iraq. Speaking at the Veterans' Day wreath-laying, President Clinton declared that, while the U.S. 'continues to hope that Saddam will comply', 'we must be prepared to act if he does not'.¹¹²

Similarly, the British Foreign Secretary George Robertson warned Iraq of a military action.¹¹³ Echoing his trans-Atlantic ally, Prime Minister Tony Blair

¹⁰⁹ Primakov, p. 328

¹¹⁰ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1205 (1998)

¹¹¹ 'Russia Opposes Use of Force to Resolve Iraq Weapons Crisis', *Financial Times*, 4 November 1998, p. 32

¹¹² Khalaf, 'U.S. Boosts Gulf Force as Pressure Grows Over Strike', *Financial Times*, 12 November 1998, p. 1

¹¹³ Andrew Marshall, 'West to Deliver Iraq Ultimatum', *The Independent*, 10 November 1998, p. 15

declared: 'we will act if he doesn't immediately come back into compliance with the U.N. resolutions and abide by the agreements he has made'.¹¹⁴

Concerned with the imminent threat of the use of force on the part of the U.S., as indicated by the evacuation of the U.N. personnel from Iraq, Russia the same day called for an emergency Security Council meeting to discuss the situation. In Moscow, the Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov reiterated that 'Russia considers that use of force will not provide a way out of the situation, will not permit the solution of this problem'.¹¹⁵

At the same time, Russia continued to work behind the scenes to resolve the crisis by peaceful means. In Baghdad, the Russian ambassador Nikolai Kartuzov met Saddam Hussein on 12 November and forwarded him letters from President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Primakov containing an appeal to immediately resume co-operation with UNSCOM and the IAEA.¹¹⁶ The official Iraqi news agency reported that the Iraqi leader told the Russian envoy that Iraq was ready to respond positively to any initiative which would meet its 'just and balanced demands', which would require the U.S. and the Security Council to 'commit themselves to the letter and spirit of the resolutions'.¹¹⁷ According to the report, Saddam Hussein admitted that his decision to stop co-operation with the inspectors was intended 'to get responses to Iraq's legal demands', and thanked Moscow for its effort 'in supporting Iraq's just cause'.¹¹⁸ The same day, Iraq forwarded Russia, as well as France and China, the so-called 'nine points', which

¹¹⁴ Khalaf, 'U.S. Boosts Gulf Force as Pressure Grows Over Strike', *Financial Times*, 12 November 1998, p.1

¹¹⁵ Osborne, 'U.S. Mobilises to Strike at Iraq', *The Independent*, 12 November 1998, p. 1

¹¹⁶ Primakov, p. 329

¹¹⁷ 'Saddam Backs Off – Says He Will Accept Positively Any Initiative', *Express & Echo* (Exeter), 13 November 1998, p. 8

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

contained its demands for the format of the ‘comprehensive review’, prompting Moscow’s response that Baghdad ought not to raise its demands too high.¹¹⁹

Similarly, Tareq Aziz in response to Annan’s latest letter to Saddam Hussein, which urged him to reverse his decision of 31 October and reiterated the offer by the Council to undertake a ‘comprehensive review’, on 14 November delivered a conciliatory letter to the Secretary General. The message contained an annex consisting of nine points, which outlined the circumstances under which Iraq would like the Security Council to open the ‘comprehensive review’.¹²⁰ According to Aziz, Baghdad’s objective was ‘not to sever the relationship with UNSCOM and the IAEA, nor to cease the implementation of its obligations under Section C of the Resolution 687’, but ‘to end the suffering of its embargoed people’, and to obtain ‘the implementation of paragraph 22 as a first step of lifting the other sanctions’.¹²¹

The Iraqi Prime Minister further declared that Iraq was ready to engage in a ‘comprehensive review’, which had been proposed by Annan, but not in a way agreed by the Security Council under the pressure from the U.S. Baghdad was eager to engage in the review within ‘a very short time’ after the resumption of work of the Special Commission and demanded a fixed time-frame for the completion of outstanding disarmament issues if such were determined through ‘an objective study’. Thereafter, paragraph 22 of Resolution 687 was to be implemented immediately, without any Council member being able to impose additional conditions.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Primakov, p. 329

¹²⁰ Marshall, Osborne, Rachel Sylvester, ‘U.S. Rejects Saddam’s Climb-Down’, *The Independent*, 15 November 1998, p. 1

¹²¹ ‘Aziz to Annan: Here is What We Want; The Letter: Baghdad Outlines Its Ambitions and Expresses Anger at American Aggression’, *The Guardian*, 16 November 1998, p. 5

¹²² Ibid.

During the ensuing debates on the Council's response to Iraq, Lavrov described the letter as indicating Baghdad's intent to resume co-operation with the U.N., arguing that the annex was simply a statement of its preferred position with regard to the 'comprehensive review'. The U.S. representatives, however, regarded the letter 'unacceptable', showing that Iraq had no intention to back down.¹²³ Richard Butler in his memoirs recalled that when the Security Council was adjourned, he witnessed a Russian and an Iraqi diplomat in the corridor outside the chambers drafting Iraq's official response to the Council clarifying the meaning of the annex.¹²⁴ The 'joint effort'¹²⁵ resulted in a second letter signed by the Iraqi representative to the U.N., Nizar Hamdoon, which characterised Aziz's letter as a 'decree of the Iraqi leadership regarding the resumption of the co-operation', and prompted Lavrov to insist that the matter was thereby answered and closed. According to Butler, during the subsequent adjournment of the Security Council, Russians and Iraqis drafted a third letter addressed to the American representative to the U.N. Peter Burleigh,¹²⁶ which asserted that the annex of Aziz's letter was 'not linked to the clear and unconditional decision of the Iraqi government to resume dealing with UNSCOM'.¹²⁷ As a consequence, the Security Council, on 15 November, agreed to accept the Iraqi statements as a rescinding of its decision to freeze co-operation with UNSCOM, while stating that the Council's confidence in Iraq's intentions needed to be established by

¹²³ Butler, p. 192

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ 'Previous Decisions Become Void', on Iraq and Takes *Financial Times*, 16 November 1998, p. 3

‘unconditional and sustained co-operation’ with UNSCOM and the IAEA on the part of the Iraqi government.¹²⁸

While the Iraqi declaration prompted President Clinton on 15 November to abort the air strikes against Iraq only 18 minutes prior to their launch,¹²⁹ both Washington and London vowed to launch military strikes if Saddam Hussein did not keep his promise to permit unconditional access to the U.N. inspectors. President Clinton warned that ‘until we see complete compliance, we will remain vigilant, keep up the pressure and be ready to act’. Similarly Tony Blair stressed that Saddam Hussein was ‘not a person we trust’, and reiterated that it was ‘not over yet’.¹³⁰ The Russian representative Lavrov welcomed President Clinton’s decision to accept Iraq’s promise, declaring that it allowed the Security Council to reach consensus on its statement.¹³¹

Despite its promise to resume full co-operation with the inspectors, and despite the imminent threat of a military attack, Iraq on 20 November refused to hand over to UNSCOM documents on chemical and biological weapons and missile systems, which Butler considered necessary to a full accounting of the countries weapons programmes.¹³² Stepping up its accusations against UNSCOM’s executive chairman, the Iraqi deputy foreign minister Riyadh al-Qaisi wrote directly to the Security Council explaining that the issue of the documents had been successfully resolved under the previous chairman Rolf Ekeus, and arguing that Butler ‘wants to manipulate the timing and substance of

¹²⁸ Bone, ‘Council Calls for Proof of Baghdad’s Sincerity’, *The Times*, 16 November 1998, overseas news

¹²⁹ Ian Brodie, Michael Evans, ‘Clinton Cancelled Strike with Only 18 Minutes to Spare’, *The Times*, 18 November 1998, overseas news

¹³⁰ Black, Martin Kettle, David Sharrock, ‘Clinton, Blair Keep up Pressure; As Iraq Celebrates, Saddam is Told: One False Move and We Will Strike’, *The Guardian*, 16 November 1998, p. 1

¹³¹ ‘U.N. Weapons Inspectors Were Ordered Back to Iraq after the U.N. Security Council Told Baghdad to Keep its Pledge...’, *Express & Echo* (Exeter), 16 November 1998, p. 8

¹³² Crossette, ‘Baghdad Disrupts Arms Inspections’, *New York Times*, 21 November 1998, p. 1

the comprehensive review'.¹³³ In response, the Security Council took no action, agreeing to give Iraq time to show its intentions. At the same time, Russia blocked a British-drafted statement that Iraq's actions 'did not constitute full co-operation', with Lavrov describing the confrontation over the documents as a situation that had to be worked out between Butler and Iraq.¹³⁴

By December, Moscow was pressurising Butler to end the period of testing and go over to the 'comprehensive review', and urged him to visit the Russian capital to discuss the progress of Iraqi compliance. Butler arrived in Moscow on 4 December and had meetings with deputy foreign minister Posuvalyuk and the foreign minister Ivanov. Posuvalyuk argued that a military action against Iraq would solve nothing and would only lead to UNSCOM's disintegration. He therefore expressed his hope that the Commission would rapidly complete the testing period and move on to the 'comprehensive review'.¹³⁵

Similarly, Ivanov stressed the importance of moving forward on the Iraqi question and emphasised the disastrous consequences of the use of force against Iraq. In his view, as the search for an unambiguous solution was 'probably futile', the main objective ought to be minimising the Iraqi threat to the region, while making sure that other countries, like Israel and Iran did not constitute a regional threat either. He warned Butler not to provoke a new confrontation with Baghdad, arguing that even though Russia was UNSCOM's partner, it was the latter's personal responsibility to avoid a crisis.¹³⁶ Finally, Ivanov argued that Butler's forthcoming report to the Security Council would determine whether a military

¹³³ Khalaf, 'Iraq Claims Butler Lacks 'Perspective'', *Financial Times*, 24 November 1998, p. 4

¹³⁴ Crossette, 'Security Council Hears Report on Iraq and Takes No Action', *New York Times*, 25 November 1998, p. 12

¹³⁵ Butler, p. 202

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 203

action against Iraq was to take place, therefore have an impact on Russia's foreign policy, in particular on the ratification of the START-2 treaty with the U.S. by the Duma. Butler was urged to bear this in mind as he wrote his report.¹³⁷ In Primakov's account, Butler at the meeting with the Russian officials appeared optimistic, and insisted that following the forthcoming review at the U.N., the Commission could close three of the four disarmament dossiers on Iraq.¹³⁸

In the effort to speed up the beginning of the 'comprehensive review', initially blocked by the U.S. on the grounds that Baghdad had first to show full co-operation with the inspectors, the Iraqi press on 6 December repeated the demands for the rapid commencement of the process.¹³⁹ To secure Russia's support for its demands, Tareq Aziz travelled to Moscow on 7 December for talks with Igor Ivanov and Yevgeny Primakov. In defending Baghdad's position, Ivanov advocated a review 'without delay', arguing that it 'could bring us to the lifting of the oil embargo'.¹⁴⁰

However, this appeared less likely following Butler's report to the Security Council on 16 December, in which the latter declared that Saddam Hussein continued to obstruct the inspections.¹⁴¹ In particular, the report listed a number of Iraq's refusals to provide inspectors with access to certain sites, nor with requested documentation. It concluded that 'in the light of this experience, that is, the absence of full co-operation by Iraq', UNSCOM was not able not conduct its

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 204

¹³⁸ Primakov, p. 332

¹³⁹ Crossette, 'U.S. Seems Ready to Accept a U.N. Review of Iraqi Sanctions', *New York Times*, 7 December 1998, p. 6

¹⁴⁰ Khalaf, 'Iraq Turns to Russians for Help', *Financial Times*, 8 December 1998, p. 4

¹⁴¹ Steven Lee Myers, Crossette, 'Iraq is Accused of New Rebuffs to U.N. Team', *New York Times*, 16 December 1998, p. 1

disarmament work, and ‘thus give the Council the assurance it requires with respect to Iraq’s prohibited weapons programmes’.¹⁴²

Visibly angered by Butler’s report, Lavrov in his speech during the meeting accused Butler of ‘lying’ during his visit to Moscow, or in the report, ‘or both’, charging him with curtailing the inspections and tailoring the report to provide the U.S. with a justification for a military action against Baghdad, while ‘we were only weeks away from fully disarming Iraq’.¹⁴³ Lavrov also claimed that Iraq had co-operated greatly with UNSCOM, attacking the Commission’s accounts of the Iraqi obstructions.

Paradoxically, as the Russian representative was concluding his remarks, the Security Council was informed that the U.S. had launched a missile attack on Baghdad.¹⁴⁴ Butler reported that Lavrov ‘seized the news’, declaring that ‘all was now revealed’ and arguing that the attacks proved that the Commission helped facilitate American aggression. According to him, UNSCOM ‘was dead, and there would be no point discussing the report any further because it was not worth the paper it was written on.’ When Butler after the resumption of the meeting asked to take the floor to respond to the Russian representative, the latter immediately left the room.¹⁴⁵

The Anglo-American military operation against Iraq known as ‘Desert Fox’, which targeted sites that could be used to store and produce weapons of mass destructions,¹⁴⁶ prompted harsh criticism on the part of Russia. In his statement issued on 17 December, President Yeltsin argued that the Security

¹⁴² Excerpts from Butler’s report in ‘U.N. Report: ‘Iraq Did not Provide the Full Co-operation’, *New York Times*, 16 December 1998, p. 4

¹⁴³ Butler, p. 211

¹⁴⁴ Butler, p. 212

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Mark Huband, ‘Iraq Hit by Second Allied Attack’, *Financial Times*, 18 December 1998, p. 1

Council resolutions on Iraq 'do not give any basis for such actions', accusing the U.S. and Britain of 'brutally breaching the U.N. Charter and the generally accepted principles of international law, the norms and rules on responsible conduct of states in the international arena', thereby 'undermining the whole system of international security' with the U.N. as its central link.¹⁴⁷ He reiterated that Russia 'consistently undertook intensive efforts for the rapid settlement of the Iraqi problem', and expressed the conviction that 'the potential for the political-diplomatic solution...had not been exhausted'. The Russian President argued that the resolution of the crisis was only possible by political means and called for the end of the military actions, declaring that they could have 'the most dramatic consequences' not only for the Iraqi settlement, but also the stability in the region as a whole.

Similarly, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov who interrupted his visit to Spain and returned to Moscow, condemned the use of force against Iraq and warned of serious consequences if the lives of Russian citizens in Iraq were under threat. Arguing that 'no one has the right to act independently in the name of the U.N., or take on the role of a global arbiter,'¹⁴⁸ he also declared that 'Russia had been forced to think about the real objective pursued by an action against Baghdad'.¹⁴⁹

Conveying his displeasure, the Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov, claimed that 'Russia's opinion was ignored' and missed out a meeting with

¹⁴⁷ 'Statement of the President of Russia', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 18 December 1998, p. 1

¹⁴⁸ Markushin, 'Tomahawks' in the Role of the Global Arbiter', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 18 December 1998, p. 1

¹⁴⁹ Yevgeny Popov, 'The Masks of Peacekeepers Were Thrown Away', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 19 December 1998, p. 3

NATO officials to fly back to Moscow.¹⁵⁰ The Director of the Department of International Military Co-operation of the Russian Ministry of Defence, Leonid Ivashov, argued that if Moscow's opinion was be ignored in the future, Russia would be forced to change its military-political approach and could become the leader of those members of the world community who did not agree to the U.S. dictates.¹⁵¹

In a telephone conversation, the Russian Prime Minister Primakov asked the U.S. Vice-President Al Gore to stop the bombing, while President Yeltsin remained unreachable by President Clinton who called him to discuss the situation. In an unprecedented move, on 17 December, Moscow in protest of the Anglo-American strikes against Iraq also recalled its ambassadors from Washington and London for consultations. In Russia, all political factions overcame their bitter disagreements to unite in their opposition to the U.S. attacks and abandoned plans for the ratification of the long-negotiated START-II Treaty with Washington, which was scheduled for 25 December.

In the Security Council, Russia was particularly infuriated by the fact that the attacks took place at the time when the Council was discussing the Iraqi question.¹⁵² Moscow called the meeting of the Security Council to discuss the U.S. strikes and demanded the resignation of Richard Butler, accusing him of being dishonourable in his dealing with the Council and working together with the

¹⁵⁰ Michael Gordon, 'Moscow Orders U.S. Envoy Home to Protest Air Strikes', *New York Times*, 18 December 1998, p. 25

¹⁵¹ Jeanna Kasyanenko, 'Terrorists with 'Tomahawks'', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 19 December 1998, p. 3

¹⁵² 'Security Council Meets to Discuss Military Strikes Against Iraq; Some Members Challenge Use of Force Without Council's Consent', United Nations Press Release, SC/6611, 16 December 1998

U.S. to set Iraq up for attack.¹⁵³ This echoed Primakov's view, expressed in the conversation with Al Gore, that the latter's provocative role made him unsuitable to deal with Iraq in the future.¹⁵⁴

Following the air strikes, Baghdad announced that it had decided to halt all co-operation with UNSCOM. Aziz, at a news conference on 21 December, declared: 'The weapons inspections were killed by the American and British missiles. I cannot give them another life'.¹⁵⁵ Instead, Iraq demanded that if the inspections work was to resume, UNSCOM had to be restructured to become similar to the IAEA, composed largely by international bureaucrats, and popular with the Iraqis due to its willingness to close the nuclear dossier.¹⁵⁶

During the discussions on a statement outlining the Council's policy on Iraq, Russia in its version of the draft proposal suggested 'three important things', which fully reflected Moscow's concerns with regard to the military operations against Iraq.¹⁵⁷ First, Russia was eager to preserve the central role of the Security Council in the settlement of international crises in an attempt to prevent any future unilateral actions by the U.S. That is why it demanded the statement to explicitly mention that the Council was 'in charge and remain in favour of political settlement of international crises'. Second, Moscow was pleased with the position of the Secretary General's office, which shifting its previous stance on Iraq and to Washington's dissatisfaction advocated a more flexible approach to the issue. Hence, the Russian draft statement emphasised that the Secretary General 'must

¹⁵³ Crossette, 'At the U.N., Tensions of Cold War Renewed', *New York Times*, 18 December 1998, p. 23

¹⁵⁴ Kasyanenko, *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 19 December 1998, p. 3

¹⁵⁵ Stephen Kinzer, 'Iraq Rebuffs France on Plan for Compromise on U.N. Weapons Inspections', *New York Times*, 22 December 1998, p. 18

¹⁵⁶ Crossette, 'Now U.N. is Left to Ponder Inspections and Sanctions', *New York Times*, 21 December 1998, p. 13

¹⁵⁷ Russia's representative at the U.N., Yuri Fedotov, cited in Crossette, 'U.N. Fails to Reach Consensus on Iraq Policy', *New York Times*, 24 December 1998, p. 6

continue to play his important and meaningful role in the crisis'. Finally, Moscow, echoing Iraq's demands, was interested in establishing a precise plan and a time-frame for the completion of the inspections and the ensuing the lifting of sanctions, its draft statement pointing out 'the need for the determination of what needs to be done in order to resume the implementation of Security Council resolutions on Iraq'.¹⁵⁸

Following Iraq's rejection of UNSCOM, the Security Council was seeking a solution to continue the inspections of Iraq's disarmament efforts. While arguing that it was impossible to resurrect UNSCOM, France on 13 January, calling for the lifting of sanctions against Iraq, proposed replacing the Special Commission with a 'renewed control commission' which would have a preventative rather than investigative role. Paris also advocated the transition to ongoing monitoring and suggested the establishment of a financial surveillance system to watch Iraqi expenditures.¹⁵⁹

Similarly, Russia on 15 January proposed abolishing UNSCOM in favour of a new monitoring system, which was to be created 'within the framework of the U.N. Secretariat'.¹⁶⁰ In particular, Moscow called for the dispatch of an assessment mission made up of representatives of 15 Security Council members and international technical experts with the aim of agreeing with Iraq how best to resume co-operation.¹⁶¹ According to the plan, UNSCOM would not participate in the new team, but solely provide some 'purely technical support' through individual experts taking part as individuals. Furthermore, all past weapon

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Crossette, 'France in Break with U.S., Urges End to Iraq Embargo', *New York Times*, 14 January 1998, p. 6

¹⁶⁰ Crossette, 'Russia Proposes New System for Monitoring Iraq Arms', *New York Times*, 16 January 1999, p.6

¹⁶¹ Michael Littlejohns, 'Drop UNSCOM, Says Russia', *Financial Times*, 16 January 1999, p. 4

dossiers were to be closed and a new long-term monitoring system established, allowing the sanctions to be lifted. UNSCOM's base in Baghdad was to be replaced by a monitoring centre that was to house an export-import control group, built around the Commission's existing operations, which would watch the imports of 'dual-use' equipment into the country.¹⁶²

With the growing calls for the lifting of sanctions, the U.S., by continuing to advocate the preservation of the existing inspection system and the right to use military force to endorse it, found itself increasingly isolated, especially since the core group opposing its policy – Russia, France, China, and sometimes, Brazil – was strengthened with the entry of two new Security Council members, Malaysia and Namibia, which were to hold seats for two years.¹⁶³ While rejecting the French and Russian proposals on the ground that any arms control system in Iraq had to remain independent of the U.N. bureaucracy, technically competent and have the freedom of action within the Security Council resolutions,¹⁶⁴ Washington offered to remove the limit on Iraqi oil sales under the U.N. 'oil for food programme', but maintained strict limits on what Baghdad can import.¹⁶⁵

The tensions between Russia and the U.S. over Iraq further intensified as a result of Butler's regular report to the Security Council in mid-January in which he reiterated that Baghdad was still trying to actively conceal its weapons programmes. In an unprecedented move, Moscow not only effectively suppressed the publication and distribution of the report, but also called for Butler's dismissal

¹⁶² Crossette, *New York Times*, 16 January 1999, p.6

¹⁶³ Crossette, 'U.S. More Isolated in U.N. on Keeping the Iraq Sanctions', *New York Times*, 12 January 1999, p. 1

¹⁶⁴ Crossette, *New York Times*, 16 January 1999, p.6

¹⁶⁵ Bone, 'U.S. Offers Plan to End Oil Sanctions on Iraq', *The Times*, 15 January 1999, overseas news

and refused to recognise UNSCOM.¹⁶⁶ Following bitter disagreements over the Iraqi question, both Russia and the U.S. by the end of January finally agreed to support the Canadian plan for the establishment of three panels to review Iraq's relations with the U.N.¹⁶⁷ However, Butler's participation in the disarmament panel was vetoed by the Russian representative.¹⁶⁸

By the end of March 1999, the disarmament panel concluded that because of Iraq's unwillingness to provide complete information on its weapons, the U.N. needed to continue to inspect, monitor and investigate the weapons programmes.¹⁶⁹ At the same time, the panel recommended the restructuring of UNSCOM, but refrained from calling for the dismissal of the Commission or the creation of a new body, as Russia and France had advocated. While Moscow was not pleased with the findings of the disarmament panel, it welcomed the recommendations of the second panel that studied the humanitarian situation in Iraq and concluded that the 'food-for-oil programme' was inadequate. The panel further recommended foreign companies to be allowed to make investments in the Iraqi oil industry.¹⁷⁰

Iraq rejected the recommendations of the three panels as they fell 'short of the goal, which should have been putting an end to the prolonged regime of sanctions', and provided 'the enemies of Iraq with the pretext for future

¹⁶⁶ Crossette, 'Iraq Still Trying to Conceal Arms Programmes, Report Says', *New York Times*, 27 January 1999, p. 8

¹⁶⁷ Crossette, 'U.S. Backs a 3-Part Review of the Iraq-U.N. Relations' *New York Times*, 28 January 1999, p. 10

¹⁶⁸ Butler, p. 216

¹⁶⁹ Judith Miller, 'U.N. Panel Urges New Inspections on Iraq', *New York Times*, 28 March 1999, p. 24

¹⁷⁰ Khalaf, 'U.N. Urged to Allow Foreign Investment in Iraqi Oil', *Financial Times*, 1 April 1999, p. 4

aggression'.¹⁷¹ Iraq's refusal to co-operate in spite of the conduct of the review it had so eagerly sought, created a dilemma for Moscow, that on one hand called for the lifting of sanctions and on the other hand recognised the need for Iraq to resume co-operation with the U.N.

The Russian frustration with the situation focused on the person of Richard Butler, whom Moscow considered as the one to blame for the state of affairs with regard to the Iraqi issue. Sergei Lavrov not only called the latter's latest report 'a waste of time', but also twice, on 8 and on 15 April, barred the executive chairman of the Commission from the Security Council discussions on the future of UNSCOM, by warning that he himself would not enter the room if Butler was present.¹⁷²

The disagreements within the Security Council, and in particular, Russia's unwillingness to accept any proposal that would not imply the lifting of sanctions on Iraq, resulted in a months-long stalemate on the future Iraq policy. By mid-November Russia became increasingly isolated in the U.N. as a consequence of its controversial and unclear position, which consisted in calling for the lifting of sanctions as demanded by Iraq, while proposing to somewhat strengthen the U.N. inspections,¹⁷³ in spite of Baghdad's calls that the system be abolished.¹⁷⁴

In particular, Moscow refused to support a plan introduced by Britain and the Netherlands on 15 April that previewed the replacement of UNSCOM by a new inspections body – the United Nations Inspections, Monitoring and Verification Commission (UNIMOVIC) - with the task of conducting more

¹⁷¹ Miller, 'Iraq Rejects Panel's Efforts to End Impasse on Security', *New York Times*, 9 April 1999, p. 3

¹⁷² 'U.N. Security Council Debates New Policy on Iraq', *New York Times*, 8 April 1999, p. 9

¹⁷³ Lewis, 'U.N. is Asked to Enlarge Iraq Inquiry', *New York Times*, 16 April 1999, p. 3

¹⁷⁴ Tareq Aziz in a statement after the meeting of the Revolutionary Council on 20 September 1999, cited in Douglas Jehl, 'Iraq Rejects Several Proposals for New Weapons Inspections', *New York Times*, 21 September 1999, p. 5

intrusive inspections, while abolishing the limit on the amount of oil Iraq could export,¹⁷⁵ on the grounds that it 'would lead to the deterioration of the situation'.¹⁷⁶

Under the plan, UNIMOVIC was to commence its work in spring 2000 and following a test period would report back to the Security Council, which would make the suspension of sanctions dependent on Iraq's co-operation, subject to review every four months. The U.N. would also maintain 'effective financial controls' over Iraq's revenues to ensure that it was not used for weapons purchase or production.¹⁷⁷ It was further previewed that the executive chairman of the Commission appointed by the Secretary General would have the responsibility for setting the tasks Iraq had to accomplish and for judging the disarmament progress.

The points of contention between Moscow, Washington and London with regard to the proposal focused on three main issues: conditions for the suspension of sanctions, the time-frame for the suspension and the linkage between the disarmament resolution and the 'oil for food' programme. While Washington supported the British plan as it required a high level of compliance on the part of Baghdad, Moscow rejected it, instead advocating a mere demonstration of co-operation with the inspectors, but not a requirement of meeting all disarmament tasks as a condition for the suspension of sanctions.¹⁷⁸

In addition, in contrast to other permanent Council members, Russia backed the reduction of the time it would take to consider the suspension of the sanctions and lengthening the time the suspensions would last. Secondly, whereas

¹⁷⁵ Bone, 'Lift Oil Limits on Iraq, Says Britain', *The Times*, 16 April 1999, overseas news

¹⁷⁶ Littlejohns, 'U.N. Qualified Support for Proposals by Britain to Ease Curbs on Baghdad', *Financial Times*, 17 June 1999, p. 4

¹⁷⁷ Miller, 'U.S. Backs a British-Dutch Plan to Partly Lift Sanctions on Iraq', *New York Times*, 17 June 1999, p. 5

¹⁷⁸ Crossette, 'As U.N. Nears Action on Iraq, Inspections Remain Unsettled', *New York Times*, 10 December 1999, p. 5

the U.S. argued that the sanctions could only be suspended after Iraq satisfied the 'key remaining tasks' by disclosing the remaining information on its secret weapons programmes, Moscow was eager to obtain specifications in advance of what Iraq was required to do and set a fixed date for the suspension of sanctions by the end of 2000.¹⁷⁹

Russia also rejected the idea of linking the disarmament policy with the subsequent phase of the 'oil for food' programme. The scheme was extended on 19 November for two weeks instead of six months in order to give the Council time to decide on the broader disarmament resolution and on how it would relate to the programme.¹⁸⁰ Whereas the U.S., Britain, and, to some extent, France, were eager to have that resolution ready for vote before the expiry of the postponement, Lavrov who 'asked for a second chance to speak to make his point twice', argued that there could be no 'artificial timetables', or links between the two issues, accusing other nations of holding the Iraqis hostage to policy differences.¹⁸¹ Instead, Moscow, albeit unsuccessfully,¹⁸² advocated the introduction of changes on the 'oil for food' programme by proposing to relax travel restrictions on Iraq, double the amount of money allowed for spending to upgrade the country's oil industry and advocating to allow Iraq more flexibility with the available funds.¹⁸³

On the eve of the expiry of the two weeks extension of the scheme, Aziz travelled to Moscow for four days to hold talks with Igor Ivanov, the Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and the Russian representative at the U.N. Sergei Lavrov,

¹⁷⁹ Bone, 'Britain Leads Move for Iraq Deal', *The Times*, 10 December 1999, overseas news

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1275 (1999)

¹⁸¹ Crossette, 'Tempers Flare in U.N. Council over Stalemate on Iraq Issue', *New York Times*, 20 November 1999, p. 4

¹⁸² Crossette, 'Five Powers at U.N. Still Split on Iraq Arms Inspection', *New York Times*, 27 November 1999, p. 6

¹⁸³ Crossette, 'U.N. Hits Snag in Renewing 'Oil for Food' Programme for Iraq', *New York Times*, 18 November 1999, p. 6

who returned to the Russian capital for that purpose, on the disarmament resolution and the issue of sanctions. In particular, Baghdad was eager to pressurise Moscow to continue to oppose the inspection plan and insist on the adoption of a resolution that would lead to the lifting of sanctions. However, the Russian government made it clear that the adoption of such a resolution depended on Iraq's resumption of co-operation with the Special Commission, and refrained from making any public promises to the Iraqi leadership,¹⁸⁴ with Lavrov merely stating that Moscow was still studying the draft resolution.¹⁸⁵

Interestingly, Moscow had earlier attempted to use its position on Iraq to bargain with Washington on the issue of Chechnya.¹⁸⁶ During the OSCE Summit in Istanbul on 18 November, the Russian foreign minister Ivanov forwarded U.S. officials a diplomatic paper requesting President Clinton not to raise the question of Russia's actions in Chechnya before the Security Council in return for Russia's flexibility on Iraq. However, Washington was reported to have rejected the deal.¹⁸⁷ This episode amply illustrated that Iraq was not only important to Moscow in economic terms, as generally emphasised, but also as a political instrument in its relations with the U.S. It also indicated that Russia was willing to sacrifice its close relationship with the Iraqi regime in return for the preservation of its major interests on the post-Soviet space, considered as vital for the country's security, such as Chechnya, and later Georgia.

Acknowledging the improbability of Moscow's vote in favour of the resolution, Washington and London concentrated their efforts in finding a

¹⁸⁴ Sergei Sumbayev, 'Talks in Moscow', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 3 December 1999, p. 3

¹⁸⁵ Crossette, 'Iraq Opens a War of World Against Its French Friends', *New York Times*, 6 December 1999, p. 12

¹⁸⁶ Gordon, 'Yeltsin and West Clash at Summit over Chechen War', *New York Times*, 19 November 1999, p. 1

¹⁸⁷ Miller, 'Russia Offers to Bargain, Using Iraq as its Bait', *New York Times*, 19 November 1999, p. 20

consensus that would avoid a Russian veto and at least, secure Russia's abstention.¹⁸⁸ In fact, the U.S. was interested in fixing a vote on the resolution before the end of the year, when five new members, four of which were expected to be less sympathetic to American policy on Iraq, were due to join the Council.¹⁸⁹ In an attempt to resolve the dilemma of supporting Baghdad while allowing the resolution to go into effect, Moscow indeed decided to abstain. At the last moment France, threatened by Baghdad to end economic co-operation together with China also abstained on the vote of the Security Council Resolution 1284, which was adopted on 17 December.¹⁹⁰

According to Lavrov, the resolution contained many weaknesses. To him, it was unacceptable to allow the repetition of the situation when the fate of the whole country was in the hands of an inadequate leadership of the former Special Commission.¹⁹¹ The Iraq leadership was not pleased with the resolution either and a day later formally rejected the new inspection plan, Aziz arguing that the resolution 'failed to meet Iraq's legitimate demand for a lifting of sanctions'.¹⁹²

Paradoxically, in spite of the general belief that the establishment a new inspection regime for the disarmament of Iraq would bring the lost unity to the Security Council's policy toward Baghdad and would be more likely to accomplish the difficult task of liquidating the remnants of the country's clandestine weapons programmes, the question of the Iraqi WMD continued to

¹⁸⁸ Crossette, 'New Arms Inspections Plan Could End Sanctions Against Iraq', *New York Times*, 8 December 1999, p. 10

¹⁸⁹ Carola Hoyos, 'U.N. Close to Resolving Iraq Sanctions Wrangle', *Financial Times*, 6 December 1999, p. 8

¹⁹⁰ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1284 (1999)

¹⁹¹ Sumbayev, 'Resolution on Iraq', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 21 December 1999, p. 3

¹⁹² Crossette, 'Iraq Rejects U.N. Decision to Create New Arms Inspection Plan', *New York Times*, 19 December 1999, p. 13

remain a major point of contention between the Council members, and a powerful driving force in the U.S. confrontation with Iraq.

Chapter 7: Russia's economic co-operation with Iraq 1996-2001

If Baghdad had less oil, and the Russian companies were not attracted to the Iraqi 'black gold' pie, would Moscow break its spears in vocal arguments with the West? Is it possible that in this case the search for the Iraqi WMD would preoccupy our country much more than the attempts to free Baghdad from international sanctions?

Russian commentator Vladimir Dunayev¹

If in the late 1990s, Moscow's political influence on Baghdad had diminished substantially compared to the Gorbachov era,² Russia's economic co-operation with Iraq during the same period had intensified greatly during the same period.

While Russia was eager to obtain the repayment of Iraqi debts and secure a strong position on the Iraqi market for the aftermath of post-sanctions era, Baghdad was interested in maintaining close relations with Moscow as a means of ending its international isolation. Whereas Russia was able to use the ongoing Iraqi problem as means of boosting its international prestige and increasing the sympathy for Moscow in the Arab world in order to re-establish economic and diplomatic standing in the region, Baghdad obtained a valuable partner to lobby for its interests at the U.N. Security Council. Finally, as Iraq enabled the Russian government to demonstrate domestically that it was pursuing an assertive foreign policy, and show internationally its ability to oppose the U.S., Moscow allowed Baghdad to conduct daring political moves to draw international attention to the Iraqi question in the knowledge of Russia's untiring efforts in assisting Saddam

¹ 'A Selfish Friendship', *Izvestia*, 30 November 2000, p. 4

² Interview with the Russian deputy foreign minister and special envoy to the Middle East, Viktor Posuvalyuk by the Radio Station *Echo Moskv*y, on 29 November 1997

Hussein to retreat without losing face.

Russia's economic co-operation with Iraq developed in three ways: the conclusion of large-scale contracts, mainly in the oil industry, to be implemented after the lifting of the economic embargo; agreements between the Iraqi government and Russian companies within the U.N. 'oil for food' programme; and illicit deals between Moscow and Baghdad, which surfaced periodically in the Western press, but were generally hard to prove.

By the late 1990s, Baghdad stepped up pressure on Russian companies to implement immediately the bilateral agreements in spite of the U.N. embargo in return for extremely attractive terms. For its part, Moscow, too, was eager to find a loophole in the sanctions regime that would allow some realisation of the signed deals. The Russian-Iraqi Commission on Economic, Technical and Scientific Co-operation, established in 1993 to promote bilateral relations, remained an important mechanism for the facilitation of contacts between the Russian businesses and the Iraqi government, providing a framework for the conclusion of a number of important accords for Moscow's participation in the Iraqi oil industry and the reconstruction of the country's shattered economy.

A new dynamism in economic relations between Moscow and Baghdad was provided with the start of the 'oil for food' agreement between Iraq and the United Nations in December 1996.³ Although this relief programme was established by the Security Council Resolution 986 on 14 April 1995 as a 'temporary measure to provide for the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, until the fulfilment by Iraq of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including

³ Patrick Cockburn, 'Saddam Taps Back into Oil World', *The Independent*, 11 December 1996, p. 9

notably Resolution 687',⁴ Baghdad persistently refused its implementation regarding the terms of the scheme as infringing Iraq's sovereignty and independence.⁵ The agreement permitted Iraq to sell up to US\$1 billion worth of oil every 90 days to pay for the urgent needs of the civilian population, while setting aside one third of the money for a compensation fund for victims of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and reserving US\$130 million to US\$150 million of the relief goods for the Kurdish population.⁶

Moscow supported the Iraqi opposition to the programme, arguing that it would make it easier to keep the sanctions in place indefinitely and remove the argument for the lifting of the embargo to provide for the needs of the civilians. However, the U.S. and Britain advocated the implementation of the plan for the very same reason.⁷ Furthermore, Washington and London were eager to impose strict procedures to prevent Saddam Hussein from obtaining control over the proceeds. Following year-long negotiations between the U.N. and Baghdad, the Iraqi government finally consented to the plan,⁸ under a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.N. on 20 May 1996.⁹

By that time, Russia had also shifted its position with regard to the programme, considering the scheme as providing Moscow with a great opportunity to increase economic co-operation with Iraq within the U.N. framework, while it was working to obtain the lifting of sanctions altogether. At a

⁴ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/986 (1995)

⁵ Barbara Crossette, 'Iraqi Denounce U.N. Oil Proposal', *New York Times*, 16 April 1995, p. 1; 'Iraq Rejects U.N. Offer on Oil Sales as Violation of its Sovereignty', *The Guardian*, 17 April 1995, p. 7

⁶ Crossette, 'U.N. Council Votes to Ease Sanctions Against Baghdad', *New York Times*, 15 April 1995, p. 1

⁷ Paul Lewis, 'U.S. and Britain Object to Iraq Oil Plan', *New York Times*, 24 April 1996, p. 8

⁸ Crossette, 'Accord Reached by Iraq and U.N. for Oil Exports', *New York Times*, 22 May 1996, p. 1

⁹ Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretariat of the United Nations and the Government of Iraq on the Implementation of the Security Council Resolution 986 (1995), S/1996/356, 20 May 1996

briefing at the Russian Foreign Ministry on 23 July 1996, Vladimir Andreyev, Head of the Information and Press Department, urged Russian organisations and businesses to become actively involved in buying Iraqi oil and delivering humanitarian goods to the country, promising the Ministry's assistance in this endeavour if required.¹⁰ In September, Russian deputy foreign minister and special envoy to the Middle East, Viktor Posuvalyuk, argued that in view of agreements concluded with the Iraq leadership, Moscow was a leading candidate for closer economic partnership with Baghdad.¹¹

In turn, Baghdad regarded the 'oil for food' programme as an effective and structured reward mechanism that would allowed it to apply stronger pressure on those governments who were interested in participating in the scheme. Iraq's choice of oil recipients was determined by its ambition to influence international public opinion in favour of the lifting of the economic embargo, and later by the attempt to generate illicit income outside the control of the United Nations.¹²

By applying a preference policy in favour of companies from 'friendly' countries during the oil allocation process, Baghdad was able to exercise greater pressure on the Russian government to step up efforts at the U.N. to obtain the lifting of sanctions against Iraq, and made Moscow's status in the programme dependent on the latter's position at the Security Council with regard to the Iraqi question. This was amply illustrated by the visit of the Iraqi Prime Minister Tareq Aziz to the Russian capital on 4 March 1997 for talks with the foreign minister Yevgny Primakov. During the meeting, the latter once again expressed Moscow's

¹⁰ Novosti News Agency, 'Russian Businessmen Advised to Buy Iraqi Oil', *Kommersant Daily*, 24 July 1996, p. 4

¹¹ Vadim Markushin, 'Iraqi Market: the Struggle for Loyalty is Still Ahead', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 17 December 1996, p. 3

¹² Paul Volcker, 'Report on Programme Manipulation' *Independent Inquiry Committee into the United Nations Oil-For-Food Programme*, 27 October 2005, Chapter I, p. 2

support for Baghdad's call for the rapid lifting of sanctions.¹³ Satisfied that Moscow, in Aziz's opinion, took a 'friendly, balanced and fair position' towards Iraq, the same month Baghdad granted Russia most-favoured-nation status in selling the Iraqi oil.¹⁴

Consequently, Russian companies purchased almost one third of the oil sold under the 'oil for food' scheme, whereby the Russian Energy and Fuel Ministry together with the Iraqi Oil Ministry co-ordinated the allocation of oil to Russian firms.¹⁵ During the first phase of the programme, eight participating Russian companies were allocated 29.8 million barrels of oil out of the total of 128.7 million barrels, compared with 12.42 million allocated to two French companies, albeit only 4.55 million more than the five participating American companies.¹⁶

In the second phase of the scheme, the number of participating Russian companies increased to ten, with their allocation share reaching 40.2 million barrels of oil out of the total 129.09 million barrels, whereas the allocation share of the five U.S. companies dropped by 0.95 million barrels, and the two French companies were allocated 12.52 million barrels of oil.¹⁷ In the third phase, twelve Russian companies participated in the programme, receiving the allocation of 63.01 million barrels of oil, compared to 12.6 million barrels allocated to three American companies and 28.57 million barrels allocated to the same number of

¹³ Marina Kalashnikova, 'The Oil-Based Future' of Russian-Iraqi Friendship', *Kommersant Daily*, 6 March 1997, p. 4

¹⁴ Natalia Gurushina, 'Russia-Iraq Economic Relations Get a New Boost', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines*, 19 March 1997

¹⁵ Paul Volcker, 'Report on Programme Manipulation', Chapter II, p. 9

¹⁶ Charles Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the Director of Central Intelligence on Iraq's WMD*, 30 September 2004, Annex B, Figure 4, p. 1

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2

French companies.¹⁸ Interestingly, during that period, the Russian Communist Party was for the first time allocated a large share of 13 million barrels of oil. In the fourth phase eleven Russian companies were allocated 89.6 million barrels of oil, 80.6 million more than two American and 45.6 million more than the four French companies that participated in the programme. In addition, the Peace and Unity Party, newly founded by Vladimir Putin, received an allocation of 5 million barrels of oil, a million less than the son of the Russian ambassador in Baghdad.¹⁹

In the fifth phase thirteen Russian companies were allocated 111.15 million barrels of oil, whereas only one participating U.S. company received 3 million barrels, and three French companies 40.2 million barrels out of the total of 366.6 million barrels of oil.²⁰ During this period the amount of oil allocated to political entities and individual businessmen of various nationalities had increased dramatically. The number of Russian political parties receiving an allocation was also on the rise: Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party was allocated 7 million barrels, the Russian Communist Party 14 million barrels and the Peace and Unity Party 3 million barrels of oil. This trend continued until the end of the programme, when during its final 13th phase, the number of Russian companies receiving oil allocation had decreased to five, whereas the number of political organisations and individuals allocated the Iraqi oil remained constant, with the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Peace and Unity Party, and Yuri Shafranik, the former minister of Fuel and Energy and the head of the Russian-Iraqi Friendship Committee together receiving a large share of Iraqi oil.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 3

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 4

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 5-6

²¹ Ibid., pp. 30-32

Consequently, Baghdad's abuse of the oil allocation process played a major role in influencing policy and behaviour towards Iraq on the part of the members of Russian political and economic establishments who directly profited from this system.²² This was illustrated by the case of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the leader of the ultranationalist Liberal Democratic Party. In 1997, he wrote a letter to Iraq's Ambassador in Moscow, in which he requested contracts from the Iraqi government under the 'oil for food programme', asserting that his party 'stood firmly against the enforcement of the U.N. economic sanctions' and describing how it had used its influence to persuade the Duma to facilitate more economic co-operation with Iraq. His request was granted, and between 1997 and 2002, Zhirinovsky made a profit of US\$8.7 million.²³

Similarly, the Russian Communist Party that since the Gulf crisis of 1990-1991 had shown itself an ardent supporter of the Iraqi regime, was from the third phase of the 'oil for food programme' onwards continuously rewarded with a large share of Iraqi oil.²⁴ It was undoubtedly these economic interests that provided a great motivation for the Russian communist- and nationalist-dominated Parliament to advocate continuously Russia's unilateral exit from the sanctions regime against Iraq and apply a strong pressure on the Russian government and the Russian diplomats at the U.N. Security Council to step up efforts to obtain the lifting of the embargo.

The pressure on the government was complemented by pressure on the part of Russian companies, which continued to conclude large-scale co-operation agreements with the Iraqi authorities, mainly in the oil industry, to be

²² Justin Blum, Lynch, 'Oil-for-Food Benefited Russians, Report Says', *Washington Post*, 16 May 2005, p. 1

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Duelfer Report, Annex B, Figure 4, p. 3

implemented following the lifting of sanctions. In mid-February 1996, following a series of meetings between the Iraqi first deputy minister for Industry and Mines, Qahtan al-Anbari, and the Russian Fuel and Energy Minister, Yuri Shafranik, Moscow and Baghdad signed accords for a number of large projects worth US\$10 billion aimed at assisting Iraq in re-building its destroyed power industry.²⁵ In addition, in a separate deal, Russia agreed to train Iraqi oil experts at the Russian Gubkin Oil and Gas Academy and to dispatch Russian petrochemical specialists to Iraq.²⁶ To allay concern on the part of the U.S. about the implementation date of the agreements, the Russian foreign minister Primakov, in a meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Helsinki the same month, assured the latter that the accords would only go ahead after the lifting of sanctions.²⁷

In mid-March 1997, an official Russian delegation headed by the minister of Fuel and Power Poytr Radionov travelled to Baghdad to negotiate the signature of another major oil accord. Following ‘extremely lethargic’ negotiations on the part of the Iraqi authorities, who appeared ‘hesitant’ to make the ‘fundamental political decision of permitting the Russians to enter the Iraqi oil market’,²⁸ a production sharing agreement for the development of the second phase of the largest Iraqi oil-field West Qurna for the duration of 23 years and worth US\$3.5 billion was signed between the Russian companies LUKoil with the largest share of 52.5%, Zarubezhneft and Mashinoimport each with 11.25%, and the Iraqi state oil company SCOP.²⁹

²⁵ David Hearst, ‘‘Giant’ Iraq-Russia Oil Deal’, *The Guardian*, 12 February 1996, p. 11

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Alexander Tutushkin, ‘Russia’s Oil Companies Stake Out Iraqi Oil Fields’, *Kommersant Daily*, 26 March 1997, p. 10

²⁹ Yevgeny Antonov, ‘The Clock is Running Against Primakov’, *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 4 December 1997, p. 3

Interestingly, while *The Times* quoted Radionov as declaring that the agreement was to be implemented ‘independently of the lifting of sanctions’ following its ratification by the parliaments of both countries,³⁰ the Russian newspaper *Kommersant Daily* explained that the contract would ‘not officially enter into force until the sanctions were lifted’. According to the newspaper, only some preparatory work, which did ‘not conflict with the sanctions’, such as geological exploration, the preparation of documentation for tender and equipment purchases, as well as construction work using local resources, was to begin immediately.³¹

In April 1997, the Iraqi parliament had indeed ratified this oil agreement with Russia, prompting Western concerns that it would undermine the sanctions regime.³² Even though Moscow continued to argue that the deal did not violate the U.N. embargo and that works would not begin until the lifting of the sanctions, Russia’s immediate commitments outlined in the Iraqi newspapers, included spending US\$200 million on activities related to the project and another US\$100 million as a loan to Iraq for the purchase of equipment, despite the fact that U.N. sanctions prohibited any investments in the country.³³

While internationally presenting its commercial co-operation with Iraq as remaining within the acceptable limits of the sanctions regime, domestically, Russia’s policy encouraged close economic ties between Russian businesses and Baghdad. However, there was a major difference in approach towards the issue between the Russian diplomats and those Russian policy-makers, aggressively

³⁰ ‘Pounds 2bn Iraq-Russia Oil Deal Flouts U.N. Ban’, *The Times*, 22 March 1997, p. 21

³¹ Tutushkin, *Kommersant Daily*, 26 March 1997, p. 10

³² Robert Corzine, Roula Khalaf, ‘Russian Deal Challenges Iraq Oil Ban’, *Financial Times*, 15 April 1997, p. 5

³³ Corzine, Khalaf, ‘Russia and Iraq Reach Agreement to Develop Oil Field’, *Financial Times*, 15 April 1997, p. 1

lobbied by the oil companies and the military-industrial complex. Whereas the former were primarily concerned with the projection of Moscow's international image as a law-abiding great power even at the expense of short-term commercial losses that were to be substituted by the long-term benefits deriving from Russia's position, the latter were interested in securing immediate gains as a means of re-establishing the country's economic and political influence. The divide was particularly deep within the Russian parliament, dominated by the communists and ultranationalists greatly sympathetic to the Iraqi regime, some of whom had personal ties with the Iraqi leadership and received Iraqi oil through the 'oil for food programme'. On several occasions they attempted to bring about Russia's unilateral exit from the sanctions regime, or at least to undermine the country's adherence to the embargo against Iraq.

Thus, on 4 June, the Duma passed the law 'On Measures to Develop Co-operation with the Republic of Iraq', under which Russia was to cease the use of budget funds to maintain sanctions against Iraq. The law, stating that it was consistent with the generally acceptable principles and norms of international law and international treaties of the Russian Federation, also permitted Russian state institutions, individuals and legal entities to resume commercial relations with Iraq, including the purchase of oil and petroleum products, the implementation of suspended and new projects, and the sale of equipment and spare parts to Iraq. Furthermore, the document authorised state institutions to initiate activities relating to the collection of Iraq's debts to Russia.³⁴ Even though the law was not approved by President Yeltsin and the Federation Council, who were eager to avoid an adverse reaction in the West and favoured an evolutionary approach to

³⁴ Dmitri Chernogorsky, 'Law Passed on Co-operation with Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 June 1997, p. 2

the Iraqi question with a gradual easing of sanctions,³⁵ its adoption by the parliament illustrated the growing impatience in some political and business quarters to resume full-scale economic co-operation with Baghdad.

The irritation of the Russian oil companies with the cautious approach of Russian diplomats was also apparent in the aftermath of Moscow's successful mediation of the Iraq crisis in autumn 1997. In an interview with *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, vice-president of LUKoil, Dzhevan Cheloyants, argued that it was too early to celebrate and that it was 'high time' to take tougher measures, namely to declare Iraq a zone of vital national interest to Russia.³⁶

While Russian oil firms were pressurising the Russian government to pursue more active steps to secure their interests in Iraq, the West was concerned about Moscow's co-operation with Baghdad, and, in particular about the illicit commercial and military co-operation between the two countries. According to some sources in the Middle East, in autumn 1998, at least three Russian companies sold missiles and other military material to Iraq in violation of the sanctions regime. It was confirmed that the sale for US\$160 million previewed the deliveries to Iraq of modern Russian military equipment, including MiG-29 and air defence systems.³⁷ The journal *Inside* claimed this deal was signed in December 1998, during the meeting between the Iraqi Prime Minister Tareq Aziz and the Russian foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov in Moscow and represented the start of a series of military accords.³⁸ According to Israeli sources, Russian companies Techmashinimport, Vneshtekhnika and Mashinoimportinvest had sold Baghdad components necessary for the production of surface-to-surface missiles,

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Antonov, *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 4 December 1997, p. 3

³⁷ ITAR-TASS, *Pravda*, 23 February 1998, p. 3

³⁸ *Inside*, March 1998, quoted by ITAR-TASS, 23 February 1999

as well as naval equipment for destroyers and anti-air missiles. Rameskoe, a company, which specialised in navigation systems and air dynamics for the planes and missiles, was also alleged to have participated in the deal.³⁹

Earlier, on 15 February 1998, *The Washington Post* published a report about a document discovered by the U.N. inspectors, which suggested a Russian-Iraqi agreement concluded in 1995, to build a large plant that could be used to manufacture biological weapons.⁴⁰ According to the document, the decision to conclude the deal was taken at the highest level of the Russian government, prompting *The Times* to argue that Moscow assisted Iraq's efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction.⁴¹ In a letter to the Russian representative at the U.N., Sergei Lavrov, the executive chairman of UNSCOM, Richard Butler, further reported that the documents, describing the talks between the Russian companies and the Iraqi officials in Moscow in June 1995, were discovered in September 1997. They revealed that the objective of the meetings was 'a project for a programme of co-operation' on single-cell protein production that could be used for civilian but also biological warfare purposes.⁴²

Not having discovered any evidence that the project had ever come to fruition, UNSCOM, on 5 January 1998, unsuccessfully requested Russia to provide information about the identities and respective duties of the Russian delegation that participated in the talks with the Iraqis. Russia vehemently denied the allegations, Lavrov in private conversations with Butler demanding UNSCOM to repudiate the press reports. The Russian Foreign Ministry called the account

³⁹ Interfax, 'Russian Firms are Suspected in Agreement with the Baghdad Regime', *Segodnya*, 24 February 1999, p. 3

⁴⁰ Steven Erlanger, 'Russians Deny Report of '95 Deal with Iraq', *New York Times*, 13 February 1998, p. 8

⁴¹ 'From Russia with Love', *The Times*, 13 February 1998, features

⁴² Judith Miller, 'Officials Confirm Russia-Iraq Deal on Plant', *New York Times*, 18 February 1998, p. 8

‘crude inventions’ and declared that ‘Russia has never made any deals with Iraq that would violate international sanctions, moreover deals involving the supply of banned technologies.’⁴³

A year later, on 4 February 1999, *The Sunday Telegraph* argued that Russia had signed agreements for the delivery to Iraq of new air defence systems and military planes worth US\$100 million, claiming the deal was concluded during the visit to Moscow of the Iraqi Transport Minister Ahmed Murtad Halil on 13-14 January 1999.⁴⁴ This time, too, Russia categorically rejected the report. The Head of the Department for International Military Co-operation of the Russian Defence Ministry, Leonid Ivashov, called the allegations ‘pure invention, even an arranged provocation’,⁴⁵ and Foreign Minister Ivanov reiterated that Russia firmly adhered to its obligations in accordance with the U.N. resolutions, which did not permit the sale of arms to Iraq.⁴⁶

Interestingly, commenting on the allegations, a Russian journalist in *Segodnya* observed that in spite of the decision of the Soviet government, on 1 September 1990, to halt the supply of all military equipment to Baghdad, the Iraqi army eight years later was still functioning, and Soviet-era weapons were still working.⁴⁷ To him, there was only one explanation for this anomaly: all these years secret supplies had continued. In support of this claim, the journalist quoted a senior engineer of a large Russian arms company as confirming that Russian specialists travelled to Baghdad on business trips to ‘bring the Iraqi military equipment, *inter alia*, the newly acquired one, into working condition’. He further

⁴³ Miller, *New York Times*, 18 February 1998, p. 8

⁴⁴ Interfax, ‘Moscow Does Not Have Military Contract with Iraq’, *Segodnya*, 16 February 1999, p. 2

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Paul Felgengauer, ‘Buy the Russian One!’, *Segodnya*, 15 February 1999, pp. 1, 2

cited an informed source in the U.N. Secretariat as reporting that the U.N. Office had for years known about the illicit Russian contracts with Iraq, whereby Iraqi officials on several occasions met the Russians in Turkey and Bulgaria to purchase not only spare parts, but also large quantities of Mi-24 helicopters. The equipment was then delivered in containers and assembled on the spot by Russian specialists.

According to the journalist, illicit Russian military sales had in fact suited Washington, as it was not interested in the dismantlement of Iraqi armed forces. The preservation of the functioning Iraqi army contributed to the maintenance of a threat to the Gulf states and consequently boosted the American military sales to the Gulf monarchies. It also provided a justification for the maintenance of its presence in the region.⁴⁸

Apart from the allegations of illicit commercial and military agreements with Baghdad, the Western press in March 1999 also accused the Russian foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov, of participating in illicit deals with Baghdad and having a personal interest in supporting the Iraqi regime. *The New Yorker* Magazine reported that the British intelligence services discovered that the latter had received US\$800,000 from Iraq as a pay-off for allowing Russian companies to illegally ship nuclear equipment to the country.⁴⁹ In fact, Richard Butler in his memoirs reported that he had received the very same information in late September 1997, and was assured by his sources that it was 'rock solid'.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ James Bone, 'Britain 'Uncovered' Iraq Payment to Primakov', *The Times*, 29 March 1999, overseas news

⁵⁰ Richard Butler, *The Greatest Threat, Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Crisis of Global Security*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), p. 106

Addressing the issue, *The Guardian* also reported that Russian companies had long been suspected of shipping banned missile equipment to Iraq, referring to the Israeli intelligence, which in August 1995 informed the U.N. inspectors that a Russian company had been selling Baghdad gyroscopes and guidance devices salvaged from ballistic missiles in decommissioned Russian submarines.⁵¹ However, the Russian Embassy in Washington dismissed the allegations against Primakov as ‘a lie and a personal insult’, its spokesman Mikhail Shurgalin observing that ‘the whole story is so stupid that it does not deserve further comment’.⁵²

Even though Russia’s illicit commercial relations with Iraq were difficult to prove, on a few occasions the U.S. succeeded in showing that some Russian companies were indeed violating the U.N. embargo. On 2 February 2000, for the first time a Russian tanker was detained in the Persian Gulf by U.S. naval forces, in charge of controlling the embargo regime, on the grounds that it was smuggling Iraqi oil.⁵³

The following day, the Russian government issued a vehement protest about the ‘unprecedented detention’, insisting that *Volgoneft-147* was legitimately transporting Iranian heating oil to the United Arab Emirates.⁵⁴ In spite of Moscow’s assertions that the tanker had not entered the Iraqi territorial waters,⁵⁵ the expertise conducted by the U.S. not only showed that it was transporting Iraqi oil, but the State Department also confirmed that there was an Iraqi officer aboard

⁵¹ Mark Tran, ‘Russian PM ‘Took Pay-off from Iraq’’, *The Guardian*, 29 March 1999, p. 12

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ian Traynor, Ewen MacAskill, ‘U.S. Impounds Russian Oil Tanker in the Gulf’, *The Guardian*, 4 February 2000, p. 16

⁵⁴ Corzine, Stephen Fidler, John Thornhill, ‘Moscow Angry at Tanker Search’, *Financial Times*, 4 February 2000, p. 12; Gennady Charodeyev, ‘Persian Prisoner’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 February 2000, p. 2

⁵⁵ Charodeyev, ‘Tanker Seized Without a Battle’, *Izvestia*, 4 February 2000, p. 2

the vessel.⁵⁶ Two months later, another Russian tanker *Akademik Pustovoyt* was stopped by the U.S. forces in the Gulf on suspicion of smuggling oil from Iraq.⁵⁷

The fact that the U.S. State Department had already in December 1999 informed Moscow about suspicious vessels working in the Persian Gulf under the Russia flag, and warned of possible inspections,⁵⁸ the Russian government's failure to conduct an investigation into the issue indicated if not government's support for the prohibited actions of private companies, then at least a high level of tolerance of such conduct, that could also be interpreted as a tacit encouragement of embargo violations. Commenting on the issue, *Izvestia* argued that the incidents 'put Russia in a bad light', undermining Moscow's position at the U.N. Security Council, where the Russian representative 'would not be able in the next months to raise his favourite subject – the lifting of sanctions against Iraq'.⁵⁹

However, this was not enough for the Iraqi government that in June 1999 resorted to an extreme measure by posing an ultimatum to twelve Russian companies to choose between the immediate realisation of the West Qurna-2 project, or withdrawal from Iraq altogether.⁶⁰ Following intense negotiations, the Iraqi Petroleum Minister, on 29 July, declared that Baghdad would not cancel the contracts with the Russian companies, while Moscow assured that the companies would begin the work on the projects 'as soon as possible'.⁶¹

Possibly in an attempt to mend relations and to obtain assurances of continuing Russian support, Tareq Aziz just a week later travelled to Moscow to

⁵⁶ 'Tanker Test Positive', *New York Times*, 7 February 2000, p. 8

⁵⁷ Charodeyev, 'Another of Our Tankers Caught', *Izvestia*, 8 April 2000, p. 2

⁵⁸ Elisabeth Becker, 'U.S. Seizes Russia Tanker Said to Carry Oil from Iraq', *New York Times*, 4 February 2000, p. 4

⁵⁹ Maksim Yusin, 'In Heating Oil, Up to the Ears', *Izvestia*, 8 February 2000, p. 1

⁶⁰ Interfax, 'Baghdad Criticises Moscow and Peking', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 24 June 1999, p. 6

⁶¹ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 July 1999, p. 6

meet the Russian foreign minister, who emphasised that ‘in the light of the Balkan events’, it was ‘necessary to undertake efforts for the political solution of other tense international conflicts’.⁶²

Subsequently, Moscow and Baghdad established yet another Committee for International, Cultural, Scientific and Commercial Co-operation, headed by the former Russian Minister of Fuel and Energy, Yuri Shafranik, with the officially stated objective of ‘assisting the lifting of sanctions against Iraq’. The nomination of the former energy minister to head the Committee clearly indicated the increased involvement of Russian oil companies in Moscow’s Iraq policy, and more importantly, the interconnectedness between Russian business interests and policy objectives. During the constitutive meeting of the Committee in Moscow in September 1999, the Iraqi Ambassador to Russia, Hassan Fahmi Dshuma, declared that Baghdad wanted Russia to obtain the lifting of sanctions in the exchange for the preservation of the latter’s oil interests in Iraq.⁶³

In the beginning of October 1999, the Russian Fuel and Energy Minister, Viktor Kaluzhny, representing the interests of Russian companies concerned over Iraqi ultimatum, travelled to Baghdad for the meeting of the Commission for Economic, Technical and Scientific Co-operation. He also had meetings with senior Iraqi officials and was presented with an 83-page proposal on future Russian-Iraqi co-operation. On his return to Moscow, Kaluzhny, in a controversial interview with the newspaper *Vremya* on 6 October suggested that Russian oil companies should work in Iraq in violation of the sanction regime, rhetorically

⁶² Interfax, ‘Ivanov Met Aziz’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 7 July 1999, p. 1

⁶³ *Kommersant Daily*, 1 October 1999

asking: 'Why should we give away a juicy chunk [of oil reserves]?'⁶⁴ He also argued that the Russian government could not prevent private companies like LUKoil, in which the government possessed only minority shares, from investing in the development of co-operation with Iraq if the management of these companies decided to violate the sanctions.⁶⁵

However, the president of LUKoil, Vagit Alekperov had a different view of the matter, at least publicly. In an interview in August 1999, when asked about the activities of Russian oil companies in Iraq, Alekperov emphasised that the sanctions posed a great difficulty, but asserted that preparatory work could already be conducted, making it possible to start the exploitation of the oil-fields within a very short period after the lifting of the embargo.⁶⁶ At the same time, he admitted the 'ambition' on the Iraqi part to make Russian companies 'run faster than the events, conducting works before the easing of sanctions.' According to Alekperov 'we do not want to do it. We as a public company that represents the interests of the Russian Federation cannot allow ourselves to violate the sanctions signed for by the state'.⁶⁷

In another interview over a year later, the vice-president of the company, Leonid Fedun, noted that 'we very much rely on the Foreign Ministry and our President', expressing hope that 'the leadership of our country finds a possibility to help Russian companies to start oil exploitation in Iraq' and 'will not let the Russian oil specialists in Iraq down'.⁶⁸ He argued that 'we are not only defending

⁶⁴ Andrew Jack, Corzine, 'Russia Claims Sanctions Against Iraq Violated', *Financial Times*, 7 October 1999, p. 14

⁶⁵ ITAR-TASS, *Pravda*, 28 October 1999, p. 3

⁶⁶ Ludmilla Romanova, Vladimir Sanko, 'Everything Needs Counting', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 27 August 1999, p. 4

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Marianna Belenkaya, Sergei Pravosudov, 'USA is Ousting Russia from Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 November 2000, p. 6

our own commercial interests there, but also interests of Russia', and that the 'Americans are waiting until we are ousted from Iraq' to lift the sanctions and take our place.

The Russian government was indeed eager to promote bilateral economic relations with Baghdad and to assist Russian businesses in gaining a strong foothold in the Iraqi market in preparation of the lifting of sanctions. Throughout 2000, the number of meetings between the members of the governments of the two countries, aimed at promoting bilateral co-operation had dramatically increased. In mid-April, the Iraqi minister of defence, Sultan Hashim Ahmed, secretly visited Moscow to discuss bilateral military and military-technical co-operation with his counterpart Igor Sergeyev.⁶⁹ In the Western press, the visit was later related to Iraq's secret negotiations with Russian companies to set up a plant producing key components of ballistic missiles.⁷⁰ At the beginning of May, President Vladimir Putin's special representative, Sergei Kortunov, travelled to Baghdad to forward Aziz a personal message from Putin to Saddam Hussein on the question of bilateral relations, whose content remained undisclosed.⁷¹ On 20 July, Russia's minister of finance, Alexei Kudrin, met his Iraqi counterpart, Hikmat al-Azawi, in Moscow to discuss Russian-Iraqi economic co-operation, and reportedly expressed his apprehension that bilateral co-operation was restrained by U.N. sanctions.⁷²

More importantly, a week later, Tareq Aziz travelled to Moscow for a

⁶⁹ M.O., 'Secret Visit of the Minister of Defence of Iraq to Moscow', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 April 2000, p. 6

⁷⁰ Michael Evans, 'Saddam Seeks Russian Missile Deal', *The Times*, 14 August 2000, overseas news

⁷¹ V.F., 'Saddam Hussein Was Forwarded a Personal Message from Putin', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2 May 2000, p. 6

⁷² M.B., 'Vice-Premier of Iraq Tareq Aziz Will Meet With Putin', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 21 July 2000, p. 1

much publicised working visit at the invitation of the Russian government, carrying a personal message from Saddam Hussein to President Putin.⁷³ In spite of criticism on the part of the U.S. Administration that declared that no Security Council member ought to receive Iraqi officials,⁷⁴ President Putin had a meeting with Aziz, discussing the question of the possibility of the lifting of sanctions against Iraq and the development of bilateral relations. Commenting on the results of the meeting, Putin declared himself to be ‘satisfied with the level of contacts’ and promised to ‘consistently continue the position of support of Iraq, *inter alia*, at the United Nations’.⁷⁵

Similarly, foreign minister Ivanov during a meeting with the Iraqi Prime Minister reiterated that Russia ‘advocates the soonest possible lifting of sanctions against Iraq in return for the re-establishment of the system of international monitoring as previewed by the U.N. Security Council’. At the same time, commenting on the U.S. negative assessment of the meetings, and demonstrating Moscow’s determination to pursue its interests even at the expense of tensions with Washington, Ivanov declared that ‘Russia is a sovereign and independent state, and we will determine ourselves with whom and to what extent to build our relations’.⁷⁶

Indicating that Moscow was serious about pursuing an Iraq policy that did not correspond to the positions of other Security Council members, Ivanov and Aziz during the meeting also discussed the question of opening an air connection between Moscow and Baghdad, which Russian diplomats considered not to be

⁷³ Vladimir Dunayev, ‘Saddam Writes to Putin’, *Izvestia*, 27 July 2000, p. 4

⁷⁴ Belenkaya, ‘Putin is Not Going to Baghdad’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 28 July 2000, p. 6

⁷⁵ Sergei Sumbayev, ‘Iraqi Prime Minister in Moscow’, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 July 2000, p. 1

⁷⁶ Belenkaya, ‘Tareq Aziz Completed Visit to Russia’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 July 2000, p. 2

subject to the sanctions regime.⁷⁷ Not surprising therefore that following the opening of Saddam International Airport in Baghdad by the Iraqi authorities in violation of the sanctions, it was a Russian plane carrying humanitarian aid that was the first to land in the Iraqi capital on 19 August 2000.⁷⁸

A month later a second Russian airliner, carrying not only humanitarian aid, but this time also a delegation of Russian oil executives, landed in Baghdad. The head of the delegation, Arngolt Becker, director of the largest Russian pipeline company Stroitransgaz, was quoted by the Iraqi News Agency as considering the trip 'as an expression of Russia's rejection of the flight ban illegally imposed on Iraq'.⁷⁹ A week later, continuing to challenge the sanctions and deepening the disagreement between the Security Council members concerning the legality of flights to Iraq, another Russian plane belonging to Vnukovo Airlines arrived in Baghdad carrying medical supplies, a football team, musicians,⁸⁰ as well as a delegation of the Commission for Economic, Technical and Scientific Co-operation and the Committee for Russian-Iraqi Friendship headed by Shafranik.⁸¹

In mid-September, the government-controlled airline, Aeroflot, held talks in Baghdad on plans to resume regular flights to Iraq, and declared that it considered commercial flights to be a non-political issue.⁸² The talks with Iraqi Airways continued in the Russian capital⁸³ and resulted in Moscow's decision at

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Charodeyev, 'Air Blockade Breached', *Izvestia*, 21 August 2000, p. 3

⁷⁹ Traynor, 'Jordan Backs Russia on Flights to Iraq', *The Guardian*, 18 September 2000, p. 15

⁸⁰ 'Russian Plane Arrives at a Suddenly Busy Airport in Baghdad', *New York Times*, 24 September 2000, p. 21

⁸¹ Belenkaya, 'Pilgrimage of Businessman to Iraq Continues', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 26 September 2000, p. 6

⁸² Jack, 'Russian Oil Chiefs Test Limit of Iraq Sanctions', *Financial Times*, 19 September 2000, p. 10

⁸³ Alexei Sinitsky, 'Big Politics of Business', *Izvestia*, 26 September 2000, p. 6

the end of September to resume scheduled passenger flights to Baghdad in mid-October in spite of U.S. and British objections that it would breach the sanctions regime against Iraq.⁸⁴

In commenting on the government's decision, a Russian spokesman in London stated that 'we have to do something'. He not only indicated that Russia's move ought to be taken as a signal that the international community had to act to overcome its impasse over Iraq,⁸⁵ but more importantly, revealed Moscow's frustration with the stalemate over the Iraq policy at the Security Council, and its ambition to move towards the resolution of the question by taking independent actions, which *de facto* undermined the embargo against Baghdad. Indeed, flights from Russia were followed by those from France, which was the first European country and permanent Security Council member to follow Moscow's lead,⁸⁶ as well as Jordan, Syria, and later, Turkey, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates, indicating the diminishing Arab support of the sanctions against Iraq.⁸⁷

The opening of Russian flights to Baghdad prompted a new wave of bilateral contacts between Duma deputies, government officials and representatives of large Russian companies, such as Zarubezhneft, Technomashimport, Sibur, Vneshtorgbank, Vnukovo Airlines and ZIL with Iraqi authorities. The visit of the delegation of Stroitransgaz in mid-September on the second plane from Russia, apart from constituting a public relations exercise, was

⁸⁴ MacAskill, 'Russians to Defy U.N. Ban by Resuming Flights to Iraq', *The Guardian*, 3 October 2000, p. 19

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Jon Henley, 'French Defy Ban to Land in Iraq', *The Guardian*, 23 September 2000, p. 18

⁸⁷ Sumbayev, 'Iraq's Chances Are Growing', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 29 September 2000, p. 3; Peter Beaumont, 'Lure of Black Gold Fuels Urge to Embrace Saddam', *The Observer*, 5 November 2000, p. 21

aimed at officially opening the representation of the company in Baghdad.⁸⁸ The delegation which was comprised of members of the Committee of Russian-Iraqi Friendship, Russian businessman, as well as parliamentarians, was received in the National Assembly, various ministries and by the Iraqi Prime Minister who noted that Baghdad 'warmly welcomes the effort by the new Russian leadership to re-establish friendly relations with Iraq'. He praised the fact that Moscow not only undertook steps at the U.N. to raise the question of the lifting of sanctions, but also took concrete actions by resuming flights to Iraq and dispatching delegations to Baghdad.⁸⁹ Answering journalists' questions after the meeting with the delegation, Aziz confirmed that following the lifting of sanctions against Iraq, Russian companies would receive priority status in the Iraqi economy.⁹⁰

This episode yet again demonstrated that Russian policy toward Baghdad was to a large extent influenced by its economic interests. Moscow's strategy of supporting Iraq's attempt to bring an end to the sanctions regime, not by fulfilling its U.N. obligations, but by gradually eroding the economic embargo,⁹¹ indeed resulted in the immediate reward and the promise of future profit for Russian businesses on the part of the Iraqi authorities. At the same time, it also showed the pressure exercised by Russian companies on the Russian government to conduct a policy that would advance their economic objectives in Iraq. The Russian foreign minister, in a letter to U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, in September, had indeed complained that the Putin Administration was coming under growing

⁸⁸ Belenkaya, 'Baghdad is Attracting Business People', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 22 September 2000, p. 6

⁸⁹ Belenkaya, 'First Arab Plane Landed in Baghdad', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 28 September 2000, p. 6

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ In the beginning of November 2000, Iraq had also begun pumping oil to Syria through a long-disused pipeline in violation of the sanctions. Brian Whitaker, 'Baghdad Starts Oil Flowing in Pipeline to Syria', *The Guardian*, 3 November 2000, p. 19

pressure from the 'Federal Assembly, many social and political interests and business and industrial circles...in favour of mitigating the limitations imposed on Russia by the sanctions in the field of its commercial and economic relations with Iraq'.⁹²

Not surprisingly, therefore, Russian diplomats stepped up efforts to achieve the settlement of the Iraqi question. On 13 November 2000, Ivanov during his tour of the Middle East was the first foreign minister to visit Baghdad after 1994⁹³ to 'reanimate the process of Iraqi settlement that today finds itself in an impasse'⁹⁴ and to reach a dialogue between the U.N. and Iraq on disarmament.⁹⁵ Before his trip, Ivanov met with the chairman of the new disarmament body UNMOVIC, Hans Blix,⁹⁶ reminding him that during the drafting of Resolution 1284 'the Russian side made a serious compromise', and now believed that 'in the process of the realisation of this resolution, it was possible to correct the situation in a way as to really ensure progress in the Iraqi settlement'.⁹⁷

Earlier, during the discussions at the Security Council concerning the nomination of the new executive chairman of UNMOVIC, Russia blocked the appointment of Rolf Ekeus, the first executive chairman of UNSCOM who had also been rejected by Iraq on the grounds that 'we need a new beginning and not the continuation of the old'. Moscow also initially insisted on the participation in

⁹² Carola Hoyos, 'Russia in a New Push to Lift Iraq Sanctions', *Financial Times*, 13 September 2000, p. 8

⁹³ Reuters, 'Le ministre russe des affaires étrangères à Bagdad', *Le Monde*, 15 November 2000, p. 6

⁹⁴ 'Head of the Foreign Ministry Plans to Visit Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 November 2000, p. 1

⁹⁵ Belenkaya, 'Ivanov Again Timely', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 15 November 2000, p. 6

⁹⁶ In fact, Russia supported his nomination after disagreements with regard to Ekeus. Alexander Reutov, 'A Swede to Deal with Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2 January 2000, p. 6

⁹⁷ 'Head of the Foreign Ministry Plans to Visit Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 November 2000, p. 1

the Commission as an observer.⁹⁸ Following the approval of the inspection Commission by the Security Council, Moscow warned that it would be ‘on lookout for anyone named to the panel who might be troublesome to Iraq’, and attempted to block the re-appointment of the two Russian inspectors, Nikita Smidovich and Igor Mitrokhin, who since the 1990s had poor relations with the Russian government.⁹⁹ With regard to the settlement of the Iraqi question, Moscow continued to advocate the idea of a comprehensive settlement, which included disarming Iraq while simultaneously showing to Baghdad the prospect of lifting the sanctions.¹⁰⁰

On 28 November 2000, Tareq Aziz arrived in Moscow on a two-day working visit, his second in six months, and held talks with foreign minister Ivanov and his deputy, Vasily Sredin, on Iraq’s recognition of the Resolution 1284. Despite Moscow’s efforts, this resolution had so far been rejected by Baghdad, which continued to pressurise Russian companies in Iraq to embark on projects in violation of the sanctions.¹⁰¹

In spite of the growing enthusiasm on the part of the Russian diplomatic establishment in autumn 2000 over the prospect of the rapid lifting of sanctions, which had already been weakened by the continuing stalemate over Iraq,¹⁰² Baghdad appeared increasingly displeased with Moscow’s inertia, and irritated by the cautiousness of Russian companies in implementing the signed contracts. Similarly, the majority of Russian oil companies grew more and more dissatisfied

⁹⁸ Reutov, ‘Lavrov Against Ekeus’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 January 2000, p. 6; Barbara Crossette, ‘Annan Faces Growing Split Over Arms Inspector for Iraq’, *New York Times*, 19 January 2000, p. 10

⁹⁹ Crossette, ‘Security Council Approves New Arms Inspection Agency for Iraq’, *New York Times*, 14 April 2000, p. 12

¹⁰⁰ Dmitri Gornostayev, ‘Solution on Iraq’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 14 September 2000, p. 6

¹⁰¹ Belenkaya, ‘Moscow Between the Nile and the Euphrates’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 November 2000, p. 6

¹⁰² Belenkaya, Pravosudov, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 November 2000, pp. 1, 6

with the Russian Foreign Ministry, which they believed did not defend their interests energetically enough.¹⁰³

In late February 2001, in spite of earlier negotiations between LUKoil and the Iraqi Oil Ministry, Baghdad warned the company that it would cancel its contract for exploration of West Qurna. The Iraqi deputy Oil Minister, Fais Shakhin, emphasised: 'Any exploration contract loses its force if it is not realised.'¹⁰⁴

Interestingly, while showing its displeasure with the cautious LUKoil, Baghdad continued negotiations with more Slavneft, which showed itself determined to intensify co-operation with Baghdad in spite of the sanctions regime.¹⁰⁵ In May 2000, the company opened its representation in Baghdad and in autumn 2000, signed a preliminary agreement for exploration of the Shoubba oil-field with estimated oil reserves of 10 million tonnes.¹⁰⁶ A high-ranking official at LUKoil explained, however, that 'it was not about us. We have fulfilled everything possible for the concluded contracts, and the works have approached a phase that is prohibited by the U.N. sanctions'. He argued that 'now everything depends on policy'.¹⁰⁷

The same belief was shared by President Putin who during a meeting at the Foreign Ministry in April 2001, instructed Russian diplomats to defend actively Russia's economic interests abroad.¹⁰⁸ This objective also dominated the talks between the Russian government and the Iraqi Vice-President Taha Yassin

¹⁰³ Nadezhda Spiridonova, 'Sanctions Against Iraq Again Discussed at the U.N.', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 9 February 2001, p. 6

¹⁰⁴ Maria Ignatova, 'Passionate Desire, Baghdad is Displeased with Russia', *Izvestia*, 26 February 2001, p. 4

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Yevgeny Kluyev, 'Slavneft Strengthened its Iraqi Basis', *Izvestia*, 9 November 2000, p. 5

¹⁰⁷ Alexander Shumilin, 'Saddam's Oil Blackmail', *Izvestia*, 7 March 2001, p. 7

¹⁰⁸ Spiridonova, 'Business Visit of Ramadan', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 April 2001, p. 6

Ramadan who arrived in Moscow on a working visit on 17 April 2001.¹⁰⁹ During the meeting with Putin, Ramadan transmitted him an oral message from Saddam Hussein who expressed interest in a strategic partnership between the two countries.

According to Ivanov, the Iraqi Vice-President and Putin reviewed projects to facilitate the development of bilateral relations and the reconstruction of the Iraqi economy, but also agreed to conduct the examination of Iraqi debts to Russia on the expert level, and to review ways of debt repayment.¹¹⁰ Speaking about Russian-Iraqi economic co-operation, the Russian foreign minister noted that the sanctions regime against Iraq 'brings suffering not only to the Iraqi people, but also losses for the Russian economy',¹¹¹ yet again admitting that Moscow's Iraq policy was to a great extent influenced by Russia's economic interests. Indeed, in 2000 alone, the sum of contracts signed between Russia and Iraq amounted to US\$200 million, whereas the agreements for the reconstruction of the Iraqi economy in the aftermath of the sanctions were estimated at being worth US\$40-50 billion.¹¹²

In an attempt to draw advantage from Moscow's ambition to secure a strong position in the Iraqi market in order to breach the sanctions regime, Baghdad tried to find a legal loophole to induce Russian companies to work in Iraq. It called upon Russia and other countries that faced losses from the embargo to refer to Article 50 of the U.N. Charter,¹¹³ which gives a state 'which finds itself confronted with special economic problems arising from the carrying out of those

¹⁰⁹ M.B., 'Vice-President of Iraq is Arriving in Moscow', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 April 2001, p. 1

¹¹⁰ Belenkaya, 'Business Visit of Ramadan', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 April 2001, p. 6

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Spiridonova, 'London 'Pitied' the Iraqis', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 18 May 2001, p. 6

¹¹³ M.B., *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 April 2001, p. 1

[preventive or enforcement] measures', the right 'to consult the Security Council with regard to a solution of these problems'.¹¹⁴ However, while Baghdad interpreted this provision as a way for foreign companies to realise projects in Iraq, and Russian businessmen viewed it as a pretext for starting the implementation of the contracts, Russian diplomats believed that the conduct of consultations as previewed by Article 50 did not mean obtaining the permission to work in Iraq, and were therefore reluctant to raise the issue at the U.N.¹¹⁵

Instead, Russia continued to advocate the lifting of sanctions against Iraq at the Security Council in the belief that Iraq's rejection of Resolution 1284 and the difficulty of reaching a consensus in the Council on the issue ought not to further delay the settlement of the Iraqi question.¹¹⁶ Therefore, Russia proposed a 'packaged approach', which previewed the easing, and the subsequent lifting of sanctions in return for the establishment of a system of international monitoring on the Iraqi territory.¹¹⁷ In Russia's view, if the inspectors failed to uncover any prohibited activities on the part of the Iraqi government related to military programmes, the Security Council was then to agree to lift the sanctions.¹¹⁸ In spite of its new title, Moscow's proposal was essentially the same idea it presented to Richard Butler during the latter's visit to Moscow in September 1997, and subsequently advocated in the Security Council during the debates on the fate of UNSCOM. This underlined that Russia's approach towards the Iraqi question remained largely unchanged.

¹¹⁴ Article 50, Chapter VII, *Charter of the United Nations*, available online at: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>, viewed on 23 March 2006

¹¹⁵ Belenkaya, 'Struggle for Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 July 2001, p. 6

¹¹⁶ Spiridonova, 'American Smart Sanctions', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 14 March 2001, p. 6

¹¹⁷ M.B., 'Russia Called on Iraq to Co-operate with U.N.', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 April 2001, p.

6

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

In contrast, the Anglo-American position on Iraq underwent a substantial shift as a consequence of their growing isolation at the Security Council on the Iraqi issue.¹¹⁹ At the end of February 2001, Britain, which for over a year had worked behind the scenes to reach a compromise that would allow the implementation of Resolution 1284, proposed the idea of replacing the ‘oil for food programme’ with ‘smart sanctions’ to facilitate the flow of civilian goods into Iraq, while maintaining controls over Iraqi funds and toughening the embargo on the purchase of dual-use goods and military equipment.¹²⁰ In view of the continuing stalemate at the U.N. over the Iraq policy, the plan that was subsequently enthusiastically supported by the U.S., was designed to re-energise the international consensus on the sanctions regime.

However, while reanimating the debate on the future of Iraq, the proposal led to further divisions among Security Council members, notably the U.S., Britain and Russia. Continuing to advocate the complete lifting of sanctions, Moscow rejected the plan and threatened to use its veto. Russia argued that it was ‘not about easing the sanctions, but about strengthening them’,¹²¹ and stressing that the proposals did not go far enough, put forward a rival resolution based on its preferred ‘package deal’.¹²²

Similarly, Baghdad rejected ‘smart sanctions’ and demanded the complete lifting of sanctions. First Tareq Aziz,¹²³ and subsequently, Saddam Hussein, called

¹¹⁹ Anton La Guardia, ‘Britain and U.S. Isolated Over Iraqi Sanctions’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 January 2001, p. 4

¹²⁰ Kevin Brown, Khalaf, Robert Shrimmsley, ‘Britain Made Secret Moves to Boost U.N. Relations with Iraq’, *Financial Times*, 21 February 2001, p. 3

¹²¹ La Guardia, ‘Britain Struggles Over Iraq ‘Smart Sanctions Plan’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 May 2001, p. 21; ITAR-TASS, ‘Against the Smart Sanctions’, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 July 2001, p. 3

¹²² M.B., ‘U.N. Security Council Discusses Iraq’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 26 May 2001, p. 6

¹²³ M.B., ‘Iraq Rejected ‘Smart Sanctions’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 May 2001, p. 6; Whitaker, Amelia Gentleman, ‘Russia Blocks Smart Sanctions Against Iraq’, *The Guardian*, 24 May 2001, p. 10

on Moscow to use its veto at the Security Council to prevent the adoption of the Anglo-American plan.¹²⁴ In response to the Council's decision to extend the 'oil for food programme' for one month instead of the usual six months in order to consider the proposal of the 'smart sanctions',¹²⁵ Baghdad halted its supplies of oil to the world market.

Russian oil companies also publicly exercised pressure on the government to block the adoption of the 'smart sanctions'. On 25 June, representatives of Russian oil and gas companies with stakes in Iraq, in a meeting requested the Russian government and the Duma 'to adopt all necessary measures' to prevent the Anglo-American project from going through.¹²⁶ Subsequently, in a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, Russian foreign minister Ivanov explained that by agreeing to 'smart sanctions', Russia would be damaging its own commercial ties with Baghdad, jeopardising US\$5.5 billion of Iraqi oil supplies to Russian companies and more than US\$2 billion in business contracts.¹²⁷ He also argued that the resolution could lead to a 'humanitarian catastrophe' at a time, when Iraq and the U.N. ought to be pursuing a 'constructive dialogue' to increase humanitarian aid to the country.¹²⁸ Similarly, at the Security Council meeting on 26 June, the Russian representative argued that the proposed plan 'led away from the implementation of the relevant U.N. resolutions and froze the present situation', containing nothing about 'investments and economic projects'. He

¹²⁴ Interfax, 'Iraq is Asking Russia', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 9 June 2001, p. 1

M.B., 'Iraq Rejected 'Smart Sanctions'', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 May 2001, p. 6

¹²⁵ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1352(2001); 'U.N. to Continue Iraq Sanctions', *The Independent*, 2 June 2001, p. 14

¹²⁶ Belenkaya, 'Business Supports Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 27 June 2001, p.6

¹²⁷ Traynor, Whitaker, 'Russians Oppose 'Smart Sanctions'', *The Guardian*, 28 June 2001, p. 15

¹²⁸ Ibid.

reiterated that 'smart sanctions' could 'damage legitimate trade and economic interests of many countries, including Russia'.¹²⁹

Faced with strong opposition on the part of Russia and its threat to use the veto to block the adoption of the resolution, the U.S. and Britain, on 3 July, agreed to extend the 'oil for food programme' and not to put forward the draft resolution for vote until the end the of year.¹³⁰

On the eve of the decision, a Russian delegation comprising representatives of large Russian companies and headed by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy travelled to Baghdad on the initiative of the Russian-Iraqi Committee for Economic, Cultural and Scientific Co-operation. There, it was received by Tareq Aziz, the Iraqi Parliament and the Ministers of Oil, Industry and Transport.¹³¹ During the visit, Iraqi officials assured the Russians that Iraq was to resume its oil export if the 'oil for food programme' was extended without any changes,¹³² Aziz hinting 'the right policy would lead to economic advantages'.¹³³

In mid-July Saddam Hussein received Russia's special ambassador, Nikolai Kartuzov, and having expressed his gratitude to the Russian government for preventing the adoption of the 'smart sanctions', discussed the perspectives of commercial and economic co-operation between the two countries.¹³⁴ On 1 August, the Iraqi Oil Minister, Amer Rashid, declared that Baghdad would 'in the first place' favour Russia in concluding oil agreements because of its opposition

¹²⁹ 'In Security Council debate, Governments Stress Need to Alleviate Humanitarian Situation in Iraq While Ensuring Full Compliance with Council Resolutions', *U.N. Press Release*, SC/7085, Security Council Meeting 4336 on 26 June 2001

¹³⁰ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1360 (2001); Whitaker, 'Russia Blocks New Sanctions on Iraqi Arms', *The Guardian*, 3 July 2001, p. 14; La Guardia, 'Iraq's 'Smart Sanctions' Derailed by Russia', *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 2001, p. 12

¹³¹ Belenkaya, 'Moscow Eased the Fate of Baghdad', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 July 2001, p. 2

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Belenkaya, 'Struggle for Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 July 2001, p. 6

¹³⁴ M.B., 'Saddam Thanked the Russian Federation', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 July 2001, p. 6

to the Anglo-American draft resolution.¹³⁵ More importantly, in autumn 2001, Moscow and Baghdad in the framework of the Russian-Iraqi Commission on Economic Co-operation signed a long-term programme for economic co-operation, which was proposed by the Iraqi Vice-President Ramadan during his earlier visit to Russia.¹³⁶

In the light of the objectives of Russia's Iraq policy, Moscow's obstruction of the 'smart sanctions' in July 2001 represented an important victory for Russian diplomacy, which for the first time since 1990 succeeded in preventing the adoption of an Iraq resolution that did not correspond to Moscow's own interests. Undoubtedly, Russia's growing economic stake in Iraq and the increasing involvement of its companies working in Iraq in the debates and the policy-making decisions concerning the Iraqi question, played a significant role in toughening of Moscow's position, ultimately overriding the cautious policy hitherto adhered to by the Russian diplomatic establishment.

¹³⁵ 'Iraq Takes Economic Action on Sanctions', *Morning Star*, 2 August 2001, p. 3

¹³⁶ 'Russia and Iraq Develop Economic Co-operation', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 October 2001, p. 1

Chapter 8: Moscow and Operation 'Provide Freedom': key policy drivers at the time of crisis

Saddam Hussein is not interesting enough for Russia to support him in any situation.

An anonymous source in the Russian government¹

Russia's failure to secure any role in the post-war settlement and reconstruction of Iraq, or to preserve its major economic interests in that country² closed the decades-long chapter of Moscow's policies towards one of its erstwhile most important allies in the Middle East. Russia's diplomacy during the months leading to the U.S. military operation against Iraq in March 2003,³ provided an excellent example of the underlying dynamics, but also contradictions and miscalculations that became a permanent feature of Russian foreign policy following the collapse of the USSR.⁴ More importantly, it brought to the fore the main factors that influenced Moscow's policy toward Iraq since the Gulf crisis of 1990-91: the strategic competition with the US.; the desire to protect its economic interests in Iraq; the efforts to appease domestic opposition; as well as the ambition to develop and expand Russia's political and economic relations with the

¹ Vladimir Dunayev, 'Bye, Iraqi Oil', *Izvestia*, 14 December 2002, p. 6

² Paul Wolfowitz Directive, issued on 9 December 2003, barred nations who opposed the war, among them, Russia, from bidding for reconstruction projects in Iraq. Tom Reid, 'Anti-War Nations Excluded from Contracts in Iraq', *The Times*, 11 December 2003, p. 23

³ For a detailed account of the U.S. war against Iraq, for example, Micah Sifrey, Christopher Cerf (eds.), *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003); Lawrence Kaplan and William Kristol, *The War over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny and America's Mission*, (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003); Kenneth Pollack, *The Threatening Storm: the Case for Invading Iraq*, (New York: Random House, 2002); Williamson Murray, Major General Robert H. Scales Jr., *The Iraq War: A Military History*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2003)

⁴ For a discussion of Russia's Iraq policy in the context of Russian foreign policy as a whole, Charlotte Wagnsson, 'Russia's Choice: Preserve the Status Quo', in Jan Hallenberg, Hakan Karlsson (eds.), *The Iraq War*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 61-76

Gulf states, and more generally, improve Russia's standing in the Middle East. It also demonstrated that in spite of the political and economic consolidation of the Russian state and the evolution of Russian foreign policy throughout the 1990s, Moscow's policy and objectives with regard to Iraq until the beginning of operation 'Provide Freedom' remained largely unchanged.

Consequently, Mikhail Gorbachov's dilemma of joining the international community in condemning Iraq and co-operating with the U.S. on the Iraq issue, while preserving close ties with Baghdad, continued to pose the same irresolvable problem for Vladimir Putin. Similarly, the interests of the business community with large stakes in Iraq, which proved powerful drivers in determining Boris Yeltsin's policy toward Iraq, remained a major factor in influencing Putin's decision-making with regard to the U.S. plans of regime change in Baghdad. At the same time, Yeltsin's ambition to expand the relations with the Gulf states and to re-build Russia's weakened position in the Middle East, remained on the foreign policy agenda of the new Russian president, who continued to pursue an active economic policy in the region, even at the expense of tensions in the country's relations with the U.S. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Russia's responses to the U.S. military operation, Putin, like his predecessors, faced a strident opposition to his Iraq policy on the domestic level and had to balance between appeasing the opposition, and conducting a policy of co-operation with the U.S. that he believed would benefit Russia in the long-term.

Finally, Russia's opposition to the war against Iraq also revealed Moscow's ongoing concerns about the American unilateralism and the diminishing role of the United Nations, the only international tribunal where

Moscow could still claim a leading role,⁵ explaining its unflagging attempts to keep the issue of Iraq within this international framework. At the same time, despite the rhetoric of friendship and support voiced in some quarters of the Russian political establishment throughout the decade, the choices made by the Kremlin during the Iraq crisis amply illustrated Russia's indifference to the person of Saddam Hussein, confirming the pragmatic nature of Moscow's interests in Baghdad.

Following his accession to power, carefully prepared by retiring President Yeltsin⁶ and confirmed during the March 2000 Presidential elections, Vladimir Putin,⁷ like his predecessor, was ambitious to improve Russia's international standing and to restore the country's superpower status.⁸ In an article published prior to becoming president, Putin, having analysed the state of Russia's economy, concluded that even at the highest growth rate it would take the country 15 years to reach the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) level of present-day Portugal.⁹ Acknowledging that a superpower status depended foremost on a strong economy, the core of Putin's domestic and foreign policies therefore related to strengthening Russia's economy as a means to regaining the country's superpower position. In this endeavour, the main task of foreign policy was to create conditions that would allow the state to concentrate efforts and resources on

⁵ Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov, *The New Russian Diplomacy*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), p. 71

⁶ Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000), pp. 351-357

⁷ D.R. Herspring, J. Kipp, 'Understanding the Elusive Mr. Putin', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 48, №. 5, 2001, pp. 3-17

⁸ S.E. Hanson, 'Can Putin Rebuild the Russian State?', *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 32, №.2, pp. 263-266

⁹ Vladimir Putin, 'Russia at the Turn of the Millenium', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 December 1999, p. 4

solving the country's socio-economic problems.¹⁰

Even though Putin recognised that the modernisation of Russia's economy required increased co-operation with the West, he rejected the notion of partnership at all levels at any cost. In contrast to Kozyrev who regarded Russia's partnership with the West as 'inherently logical', Putin believed that due to its geopolitical position Russia had national interests everywhere.¹¹ The emphasis on the ubiquity of Moscow's interests represented not only the continuation of a foreign policy course pursued by the former foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov, but a more realistic and pragmatic approach to foreign affairs, based on the necessity to match ambitions to resources.¹²

On a practical level, stressing his rejection of a 'unipolar world' dominated by the U.S., Putin embarked on the policy of restoring Soviet-era ties with North Korea, China and Libya, and intensifying Russia's relations with Iran and Syria, developed during the Yeltsin era.¹³ In December 2000, Igor Sergeyev was the first Russian Defence Minister to visit Tehran since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, marking the resumption of military co-operation between Russia and Iran and abrogating the secret 1995 agreement with the U.S. to halt the sales of conventional weapons to the country.¹⁴ In March 2001, in spite of Washington's attempt to prevent Russia from exporting arms to Iran, the new alliance was cemented by the signature of the Russian-Iranian co-operation pact aimed at

¹⁰ Address at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 January 2001, published as 'President Putin on the Tasks of the Russian Diplomacy', *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn*, №.2, 2001, p. 3; Igor Ivanov, 'Directions of Russian Foreign Policy', in Igor Ivanov, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Epoch of Globalisation: Articles and Speeches*, (Moscow: Olma Press, 2002), p. 161

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6

¹² Labelled by Richard Sakwa as 'new realism', *Putin's Choice*, (New York: Routledge, 2004)

¹³ Robert Freedman, 'Russian Policy Toward the Middle East: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Putin Challenge', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 55, №. 1, 2001, pp. 58-90

¹⁴ Ian Traynor, 'Kremlin's Arms Salesmen Target US Foes', *The Guardian*, 5 December 2000, p. 16

establishing the multi-billion-dollar arms trade.¹⁵ The same year, Moscow announced its plans to modernise the military forces of Libya and Algeria, discussed potential arms deliveries to Yemen, and offered Syria a wide-ranging arms package to upgrade its Soviet-era weapons systems.¹⁶ Already in 2000, Russia's military exports had risen by 22 per cent over the previous year, increasing its share of the world market by 50 per cent.¹⁷

However, in spite of the new dynamics in Russian foreign policy that inevitably led to a cooling down in its relations with the U.S., Putin continued to regard Washington as Moscow's most important political and economic partner. Underlying this view, the Russian president, following the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C. on 11 September 2001, was the first leader to condemn the attacks,¹⁸ joined the U.S.-led coalition against international terrorism, and later, in an unprecedented way, supported the American-led military operation against the Taliban in Afghanistan¹⁹ in spite of the growing opposition on the part of the anti-American military and conservative sections of the Foreign Ministry.²⁰ Even though some perceived Russia's rapprochement with the U.S. as an easily reversible strategic move, Putin himself in an interview with the America's ABC News on 7 November 2001, asserted that Russia had chosen the partnership with Washington 'a long time ago', but that 'unfortunately' until

¹⁵ Susan Glasser, 'Russia, Iran Renew Alliance Meant to Boost Arms Trade', *Washington Post*, 13 March 2001, p. 14

¹⁶ Igor Korochenko, 'RF Will Strengthen the Military Potential of Damascus', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 24 April 2001, p. 6

¹⁷ Ed Blanche, 'Russia Steps Up Mid-East Arms Drive', *The Middle East*, July/August 2001, pp. 20-21

¹⁸ President Vladimir Putin's Address to the Nation, ORT Channel, 11 September 2001

¹⁹ Elena Stepanova, 'U.S.-Russia Co-operation in Afghanistan and Its Implications', *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol. 10, №. 4, 2001, pp. 92-95

²⁰ Yuri Fedorov, 'Quiet Opposition of the Generals', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 16-22 October 2001, p. 5

11 September it remained 'unnoticed.'²¹

In view of Russia's unprecedented strategic rapprochement with the U.S., it was not surprising that the Bush Administration believed that Moscow and Washington could also co-operate in resolving the issue of Iraq.²² Even though Baghdad's involvement into the 11 September attacks and the link between the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and terrorism could not be proved, the U.S. was determined to prevent such a development in the future and to ensure the definitive disarmament of Iraq,²³ preferably with Moscow's support. The assumption that the Kremlin was prepared to move on with regard to Iraq appeared to be correct, as Russia, at the U.N. Security Council, for the first time agreed to a revision of the sanction regime by the mid-2002 in return for the American clarification of Resolution 1284, which set out the conditions for the lifting of sanctions.²⁴ However, securing Moscow's backing for a potential military campaign against Baghdad proved to be wishful thinking on the part of the White House.

While the U.S. military operation against the Taliban largely corresponded to Moscow's own interests of removing a major security threat from the country's southern frontiers,²⁵ the American plans with regard to Baghdad were diametrically opposed to Russia's objectives in Iraq. Sceptical about

²¹ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 9 November 2001, p. 3

²² Stephen Fidler, Carola Hoyos, 'U.S. Looks to Moscow for Help to Curb Iraq', *Financial Times*, 7 November 2001, p. 9

²³ Lawrence Freedman, 'War in Iraq: Selling the Threat', *Survival*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Summer 2004, p. 9

²⁴ Brian Whitaker, 'U.N. to Impose New Sanctions on Baghdad', *The Guardian*, 30 November 2001, p. 6

²⁵ After the start of the Chechen conflict in 1999, Russia had repeatedly expressed concern about the Taliban supporting the Chechen separatists. In September 2000, during his visit to Pakistan, the Presidential envoy, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, claimed that terrorist training camps had been run in Afghanistan, and later asserted a link between the Taliban and anti-Russian forces in Chechnya. Russia's concern about the Taliban led to speculations in May and June 2000 about the possibility of Russian air strikes against the Taliban, but ultimately no action was taken. Michael Gordon, 'Russia Warns Afghanistan Not to Aid Rebel Groups', *New York Times*, 25 May 2000, p. 7

Washington's attempts to link international terrorism and Iraq, Moscow considered the situation in Iraq as being substantially different from that in Afghanistan. Speaking at an international conference in Rome, the Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, stated that although Russia approved of the strike against Afghanistan, it was not willing to approve of an operation against Iraq.²⁶ Similarly, Russia's deputy foreign minister, Vyacheslav Trubnikov, in an interview with the newspaper *Vremya Novostei*, while reaffirming Russia's co-operation with the U.S. in the fight against international terrorism, argued that 'war on terror' and the issue of Iraq 'are completely different things'.²⁷ Therefore, Russia, in the aftermath of the successful completion of the military operation in Afghanistan, not only warned the U.S. against making Iraq its next target in the 'war on terror', but the Russian deputy foreign minister, Alexander Saltanov, also signalled that Moscow would leave the international coalition if Iraq was attacked, arguing that there was no evidence of Baghdad's involvement in the events of 11 September.²⁸

Considering the substantial economic interests of Russian oil companies in Iraq and the much-anticipated prospect of Iraqi debt-repayments, Moscow was not interested in a military campaign against Iraq, and even less in a regime change in Baghdad. Throughout the 1990s, Russian diplomatic activities had been directed at obtaining the lifting of sanctions against Iraq and expanding economic and commercial ties with Baghdad. Moscow was therefore not prepared to see its efforts rendered meaningless.

²⁶ 'The Axis of Evil', *Izvestia*, 5 February 2002, p. 1

²⁷ Traynor, 'One Year On: Kremlin Gives Short Shift to U.S. Hawk over Iraq', *The Guardian*, 12 September 2002, p. 2

²⁸ Richard Owen, James Bone, Christopher Walker, 'America Warned Against Making Iraq Next Target', *The Times*, 29 November 2001, overseas news

In particular, Russia was deeply concerned about the prospect of being ousted from the lucrative Iraqi oil market and from the participation in the reconstruction of the country's shattered industry by the American and other foreign companies in case of a U.S. invasion. In exemplifying this concern, Nikolai Tokaryev, General Director of Zarubezhneft, in an interview with *Vremya Novostei*, expressed anxiety about the future of Russia's contracts signed with Baghdad, and argued that 'the Americans won't share this market with anyone. They don't need us there'.²⁹

Consequently, in an attempt further to consolidate their economic position in Iraq in the face of a potential U.S. military threat, Russian companies throughout the crisis continued to negotiate and sign major co-operation agreements with Iraqi authorities. In what was widely perceived as a 'major blow' to Bush's attempts to build international support against Iraq,³⁰ Russia, on 19 August 2002, announced a highly symbolic US\$40 billion trade agreement with Iraq, consisting of a dozen separate deals on chemical products, irrigation, electrical energy, railroad construction and transport, to be implemented over the subsequent five years.³¹ On 10 December 2002, Zarubezhneft and Rosneft publicised the forthcoming signature of a contract to develop the Nahr Umr oil field, containing about three billion tonnes of crude oil and worth £350 billion.³² Furthermore, following the visit to Iraq of the representatives of Russian oil companies, accompanied by the deputy foreign minister Alexander Saltanov and the first deputy Energy minister Ivan Matlashov in mid-January 2003, Baghdad

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Sylvia Pfeifer, 'Russia to Sign US\$40 Billion Trade Deal with Iraq', *The Business*, 18 August 2002, p. 5

³¹ David Rennie, Ben Aris, 'Blow for Bush as Russia Agrees £27 Billion Iraq Deal', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 August 2002, p. 12

³² Paton Walsh, 'Russian Oil Giants Try to Beat U.S. to Iraqi Reserves', *The Guardian*, 11 December 2002, p. 17

granted Russia a number of additional oil projects.³³

Russia's concerns about its position in Iraq were further nourished by Iraq itself that while granting advantageous contracts to Russian companies, also pressurised Moscow not to support the U.S. military operation. In December 2002, Baghdad cancelled the major deal for the development of West Qurna-2, signed with LUKoil in 1997,³⁴ in response to reports that the company's President Vagit Alekperov was conducting talks with the U.S. in an attempt to secure guarantees for the contract in case of the regime change in Iraq.³⁵ Being given to understand that the duration of the advantageous agreements concluded with Iraq corresponded to the lifespan of the present government in Baghdad and to Moscow's efforts in bringing about the lifting of sanctions, Russia was interested in preventing a military threat to Iraq, and to resolve the issue within the framework of the U.N. without delay.

In addition, Russia's ambition to avert a war against Iraq was greatly influenced by the vulnerability of the Russian oil-dependent economy to the sudden swings in the global price of oil. As Russia's federal budget for 2003 was calculated on the basis of US \$21.5 for barrel of oil,³⁶ the fall in oil price of just US\$1 meant budget losses of about US \$1 billion.³⁷ At the same time, even though the rapid rise in the price of oil due to the instability in the Persian Gulf would have increased Russian revenues, it would also have further deepened the

³³ Maria Ignatova, 'Oil Bouquet from Baghdad', *Izvestia*, 18 January 2003, p. 5; Paton Walsh, 'Iraq Reverses Russia Oil Ban', *The Guardian*, 21 January 2003, p. 4

³⁴ Richard Beeston, 'Baghdad Pulls Plug on Russian Oil Deal', *The Times*, 13 December 2002, p. 18

³⁵ Tareq Aziz in an interview with the Canadian newspaper *National Post*, quoted by Alexei Yefimov, 'Hussein Punished Alekperov', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 December 2002, p. 3

³⁶ Interview with the head of the Duma Committee on Budget and Taxation, Mikhail Zadornov. 'Oil Dollars Are Hidden Under the Blanket', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 10 March 2003, pp. 13, 14

³⁷ Tatiana Netroba, Dmitri Piskarenko, 'Terminator George', *Argumenty i Fakty*, №. 8, February 2003, pp. 1, 4; According to some estimates, even US\$2 billion. Robin Shepherd, 'Oil Fear Prompt Putin to Send Envoy to Baghdad', *The Times*, 24 February 2003, p. 14

country's dependency on its oil sector at the expense of investments in other sectors, a development that Russian policy-makers were eager to avoid.³⁸

Russia was also eager to maintain the presence of its oil companies in the Iraqi industry. According to the Committee on Economic, Technical, Scientific and Cultural Co-operation, at the beginning of 2002 around 200 Russian companies were working in Iraq, and contracts worth US\$2.4 billion were concluded with Baghdad.³⁹ It is not surprising therefore that the president of Souyzneftegaz and the former Energy minister, Yuri Shafranik, at a special press conference at the end of October 2002, called on the Russian government to settle the Iraqi crisis without the resort to war.⁴⁰

In Moscow's eyes this could be achieved by returning the international inspectors to Iraq on the basis of the existing U.N. resolutions and to 'assure the international community that Iraq does not possess the weapons of mass destruction'.⁴¹ At the same time, in Russia's view, the inspectors' failure to uncover the Iraqi weapons of mass destructions 'within a reasonable time limit', and their final verdict on the Iraqi weapons programmes, was to lead to lifting of sanctions against Iraq.⁴²

Whereas Moscow believed that the question of Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction could only be answered as a result of the inspections, the White House considered the problem to be not the return of inspectors, but the

³⁸ For impact of oil on Russian policy choices, Moises Naim, 'Russia's Oily Future', *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2004, pp. 95-96

³⁹ 'Oilmen Agitate for Peace', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 28 October 2002, p. 6

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Natalie Nougayrede, 'Moscou s'oppose à toute action militaire', *Le Monde*, 16 February 2002, p. 4

⁴² Russian defence minister Sergei Ivanov in an interview with the PBS Radio in the U.S., full transcript available online at: *Online Newshour*, PBS, 20 September 2002, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/july-dec02/russia_9-20.html, viewed on 10 May 2006

liquidation of the banned weapons and Iraq's fulfilment of all U.N. resolutions.⁴³ Consequently, while the U.S. supported by Britain⁴⁴, favoured a tougher resolution to prevent further Iraqi deception, Russia regarded the existing U.N. resolutions sufficient to force Iraq to comply.⁴⁵ Moscow therefore opposed the U.S. proposals for the adoption of a new resolution on Iraq, which was to contain the fact of Iraq's breach of the previous resolutions and agreements concerning the admission of the U.N. inspectors and the liquidation of weapons; the time-frame for Baghdad's compliance with the demands posed by the U.N.; and the actions the U.N. would adopt in case of Iraq's refusal to accept the new resolution.⁴⁶ In particular, Russia was concerned that it would place new unfulfillable demands on the Iraqi leadership and therefore further delay the lifting of sanctions. More importantly, Moscow objected to the automatic use of force advocated by Washington in case of Iraq's non-compliance with the new intrusive inspection terms, perceiving it as a pretext for the U.S. unilateral military strike against Iraq.

Even following its agreement to a new resolution on Iraq, Moscow chose to support the French proposal, which advocated a two-stage approach to the resolution of the Iraqi crisis, and aimed at preventing the possibility of an automatic use of force by the U. S. in case of Iraq's defiance of the inspection regime.⁴⁷ Speaking about the plan, the Russian deputy foreign minister, Fedotov,

⁴³ Sergei Sumbayev, 'Everything Depends on the Resolution', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 17 September 2002, p. 3

⁴⁴ On Britain's policy in the Iraq crisis, Robin Cook, *The Point of Departure: Diaries From the Front Bench*, (London: Pocket Books, 2003), in particular, pp. 186-190, 198-221

⁴⁵ Marcus Warren, 'West Woos Russia over Tough Line on Iraq', *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 September 2002, p. 16

⁴⁶ Alexander Shumilin, 'Condemn Saddam', *Izvestia*, 17 September 2002, p. 7

⁴⁷ Paton Walsh, Watt, *The Guardian*, 24 September 2002, p. 5; Shumilin, 'Moscow Refused to Give Up Iraq', *Izvestia*, 30 September 2002, p. 2; Yevgeny Grigoriyev, 'Working of Moscow' Did Not Succeed', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 September 2002, pp. 1, 6

in an interview with ITAR-TASS stated that the French draft ‘meets our positions’, emphasising that ‘Such a resolution, first of all, must not include new unfulfillable demands. Second, it must be based on all the preceding Security Council resolutions on Iraq, and third, it must not contain clauses that can be used for the automatic use of force.’⁴⁸

Despite these declarations, Moscow, in an effort to accommodate the U.S. position on Iraq, cautiously declared its willingness to consider approving military force against Iraq if Baghdad failed to comply with the new conditions for the arms inspections.⁴⁹ While arguing that the inspectors should be given a chance to test Iraq’s promise to co-operate, foreign minister Ivanov in October 2002, outlined the desirable course of action in case Baghdad failed to comply: ‘If...in the course of this [inspectors’] work, problems appeared, the inspectors should report what problems have arisen. Then, the Security Council should again consider and decide whether harsher measures, right up to the use of force, are required.’⁵⁰ However, despite its modified rhetoric, Moscow continued to perceive the sole purpose of a new resolution on Iraq as creating favourable conditions for the return of the inspectors to Iraq and for their successful mission.⁵¹

On the official level, Moscow justified its unwillingness to adopt harsher decisions on Iraq by the lack of information concerning Baghdad’s possession of weapons of mass destruction.⁵² This question was raised by president Putin during his talks in Moscow on 10 October 2002 with the British Prime Minister Tony

⁴⁸ ‘Russia Agrees with France to Oppose U.S. on Policy on Iraq’, *Morning Star*, 9 October 2002, p. 2

⁴⁹ Yulia Rusanova, ‘USA is Seeking an Unclear Formulation’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 21 October 2002, p. 6

⁵⁰ Anton La Guardia, Philip Delves Broughton, ‘U.N. Deal in Sight with Russia Set to Back U.S.’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 October 2002, p. 21

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² On the search Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction by the U.N. international inspectors, Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2004)

Blair,⁵³ and echoed by Lavrov at the Security Council in December 2002, when he argued that having heard the accusations against Iraq, ‘we have not seen the proof that confirms that’.⁵⁴ Even after being presented with what the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, described as ‘irrefutable and undeniable evidence’ of Iraq’s possession of weapons of mass destruction and its attempts to conceal them from the inspectors, based on satellite images and audio intercept of conversations between Iraqi officers,⁵⁵ Russia showed itself sceptical. It advocated the continuation of the inspections⁵⁶ and demanded more time to study the evidence presented by the U.S.⁵⁷

In fact, the Russian government did not believe initially that the U.S. would be able to extend its military campaign to Baghdad without an international mandate. The Russian foreign minister Ivanov therefore emphasised the need of a ‘firm legal basis’ in the ‘war on terror’ and advocated a strong role of the United Nations in co-ordinating any joint international effort.⁵⁸ Similarly, President Putin in an interview with *Wall Street Journal*, also declared his opposition to extending the ‘war on terror’ to Iraq and argued that only the U.N. could sanction such a move.⁵⁹ More importantly, revealing a major miscalculation on the part of the Russian government, the Foreign Ministry was confident that in view of its newly

⁵³ Ekaterina Grigoriyeva, ‘Without an Oriental Market’, *Izvestia*, 12 October 2002, p. 1; Michael White, ‘Putin Demands Proof over Iraqi Weapons’, *The Guardian*, 12 October 2002, p. 2

⁵⁴ Quoted in ITAR-TASS, ‘Guilty of Being Saddam’, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 21 December 2002, p. 1

⁵⁵ Usborne, ‘Powell: The Case Against Iraq’, *The Independent*, 6 February 2003, p. 1

⁵⁶ ‘Iraq Crisis: Colin Powell Speech: World Reaction’, *The Independent*, 6 February 2003, p. 3; Yevgeny Verlin, ‘Powell Will Finish Saddam off With Compromate’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 8 February 2003, pp. 1, 6

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Michael Binyon, ‘Russia Warns Off U.S.’, *The Times*, 26 January 2002, overseas news

⁵⁹ ‘Go Easy on Saddam, Putin Warns Americans’, *Daily Mail*, 12 February 2002, p. 15

forged strategic partnership with the U.S., it 'will convince the Americans not to go that far'.⁶⁰

Even though by January 2003, Russia had realised that it would not be able to dissuade Bush from attacking Iraq, the Russian government still thought it possible to delay the start of the military operation in the hope that in the meantime the inspectors would complete their work in Iraq and provide a definitive answer to the question of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Moscow believed that as long as the inspectors continued their work without impediments on the part of Baghdad, Washington would not have a strong enough justification for launching an attack on Iraq.

This belief was indeed confirmed by the Russian representative at the U.N., Lavrov, in an interview with *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in mid-January 2003. When asked if war against Iraq was unavoidable, Lavrov declared that the Russian delegation at the U.N. did 'not see the situation as critical'.⁶¹ He emphasised that the Iraqi government had not created obstacles for the work of the inspectors, but admitted that there were still questions that required clarifications. He reiterated that Moscow did not have any information on the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and required 'concrete confirmation' for the allegations that Iraq did possess such weapons.

Responding to the question of whether the U.S. could return to a peaceful settlement of the Iraqi question after having invested colossal sums in the preparation of war, Lavrov argued that it was 'irresponsible' to approach the solution of the problem 'that could have a great impact on the whole region' with

⁶⁰ Ibid., Quoting an anonymous Russian diplomat

⁶¹ Alexander Kuranov, 'Sergei Lavrov: There Are No Pre-given Decisions', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Supplement Dipkurier, №. 2, 27 January 2003, p. 13

this single criteria in mind. To him, the main question was whether Iraq did or did not possess weapons of mass destruction, and ‘only afterwards one can talk about any further steps in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions’.⁶² Expressing the same belief, Russian foreign minister told the al-Jazeera TV channel that the chances that the Security Council would agree on the use of force were ‘practically nil’.⁶³

While searching for a compromise at the U.N., the Russian government continued to maintain close ties with Iraqi authorities, prompting Iraq’s foreign minister, Naji Sabri, who travelled to Moscow on 28 April 2002 to meet with his Russian counterpart, to declare that relations between Russia and Iraq ‘are developing from good to great’.⁶⁴ Moscow was eager to use its relationship with Baghdad to mediate in the crisis, pressuring Saddam Hussein to re-admit international inspectors into the country and to co-operate with the new intrusive inspection regime.

Interestingly, Russia perceived Baghdad’s agreement in September 2002 to return the inspectors to Iraq as a result of its successful diplomacy. Moscow emphasised that it was following a series of meetings between Ivanov and Sabri, and the latter’s meeting with the Russian representatives at the U.N., that Aziz announced Iraq’s decision, forwarding the Russian side a copy of a letter, which had been dispatched to the U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.⁶⁵

At the same time, indicating the pragmatic nature of Russia’s interests in Iraq and its indifference to the regime of Saddam Hussein as long as its interests

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Shepherd, ‘Russia’s Oil Interest Fear’, *The Times*, 28 January 2003, p. 13

⁶⁴ Shumilin, ‘Iraqi Minister Came to Ask Political Protection from the U.S.’, *Izvestia*, 29 April 2002, p. 2

⁶⁵ Dmitri Gornostayev, ‘Saddam Gave Up’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 18 September 2002, p. 5

were secured, Moscow for the first time in Russian-Iraqi history entered in contact with the Iraqi opposition. In August 2002, Russian diplomat, Andrei Kroshin, conducted talks in Washington with a representative of the National Congress on the future of Russian economic interests in Iraq in case of regime change in Iraq.⁶⁶ However, eager to play down the importance of the talks to the Iraqi leadership, the Russian foreign minister at a press-conference with his Iraqi counterpart in Moscow asserted that 'these contacts do in no way mean the change of course of Russian policy on the question of the Iraqi settlement'.⁶⁷

Commenting on Moscow's position, a group of Russian analysts in *Izvestia* argued that Russia was indifferent to Iraq, and even more so to Saddam Hussein, and that the question of war was 'secondary, as Russia itself does not refrain from using military means to resolve problems'. According to them, 'what matters, is economics and concessions promised by Saddam to Russian companies'. They concluded that 'as long as Russia does not receive guarantees from the U.S. for the preservation of its economic interests in Iraq after Saddam, Russian position is unlikely to change'.⁶⁸

This argument reflected the position of the Russian government, which, responding to the insistent demands of Russian business elite,⁶⁹ attempted to gain major concessions from the U.S. in return for its flexible position on Iraq, for instance, guarantees for the contracts signed by Russian oil companies with Iraqi

⁶⁶ Maksim Yusin, 'Russia Entered in Contact with the Iraqi Opposition', *Izvestia*, 31 August 2002, p. 1

⁶⁷ Gennady Charodeyev, Elena Shesternina, 'Iraqi Minister Asked Russia to Protect Saddam from the U.S.', *Izvestia*, 3 September 2002, p. 2

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ For example, President of Yukos, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, 'Mikhail Khodorkovsky Expressed the Opinion that Washington Ought to Compensate Russian Losses...', ITAR-TASS, 23 October 2002, available online at: <http://www.integrum.ru/>, viewed on 3 March 2006

authorities, the repayment of the Iraqi debts by a new Iraqi government, and Russia's participation in the post-war economy of Iraq.⁷⁰

During his visit to Moscow in February 2003, the U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos indeed hinted that the repayment of the Iraqi debts would be honoured following the regime change, indicating that the likelihood for Russia to receive the money 'clearly would be dramatically enhanced if Russia stood with us in this encounter'.⁷¹ Already before that, the Bush Administration had courted the Russian government with promises of further concessions. During the annual session of the Russian-U.S. Business Council on 4 October 2002, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, declared that President Bush would continue to work with the Congress on the cancellation of the much-resented Jackson-Vanik Amendment⁷² with regard to Russia.⁷³

However, in spite of the recognition on the part of Washington that Russia's position in the Iraqi crisis largely depended on economic considerations,⁷⁴ the Bush Administration refrained from offering Moscow concrete guarantees with regard to the future of its oil contracts or debt repayment, merely promising to take Russia's interests into account.⁷⁵ Ultimately, it did not uphold its promise concerning the Jackson-Vanik amendment, nor did it accelerate Russian entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

⁷⁰ Lilia Shevtsova, 'Russia is Discussing Price Lists', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 22-28 October 2002, p. 5; Will Stewart, 'Putin Holds Out Olive Branch to White House', *The Express*, 28 February 2003, p. 5

⁷¹ Tony Allen-Mills, David Cracknell, Sarah Baxter, 'All We Are Saying Is...Give War a Chance', *Sunday Times*, 23 February 2003, p. 13

⁷² Signed into law in January 1975. Denied normal trade relations to certain countries with non-market economies that restricted emigration rights, and therefore applied to the Soviet Union.

⁷³ Shumilin, 'Saddam is Getting Better', *Izvestia*, 5 October 2002, p. 6

⁷⁴ For instance during the visit of U.S. State Department officials to Russia in connection with Iraq in September 2002. Dan Morgan, David B. Ottaway, 'In Iraqi Scenario, Oil is Key Issue', *Washington Post*, 15 September 2002, p. 1

⁷⁵ Bush-Putin Summit in St. Petersburg, 22 November 2002, Vasily Safonchuk, 'To NATO to the East', *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 26 November 2002, p. 1

Moscow's inability to obtain guarantees for its interest in Iraq created a sense of pessimism on the part of the Russian political establishment with regard to Moscow's future in that country.⁷⁶ Reflecting this sentiment, Duma deputy Andrei Kokoshin upon his return from the U.S. where he had meetings with members of the political establishment, in an interview with *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* argued that Russia's ability to exercise any influence on the political situation in Iraq in the aftermath of the war would be 'very limited, if not non-existent' due to Russia's limited resources.⁷⁷

At the same time, on the domestic level, it was generally believed that if the Kremlin was not able to protect its economic interests in Iraq and assist Russian oil companies in securing their future participation in the Iraqi energy market, then its foreign policy was flawed and had to be modified. Even though Putin succeeded to overcome the domestic opposition in his rapprochement with the U.S. in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 due to his high prestige in the society,⁷⁸ the situation was very different during the crisis in Iraq. Given the strong anti-war positions of France and Germany, and the general feeling in Russia that it had received nothing in return for its support of the U.S. war in Afghanistan,⁷⁹ Putin was forced to adopt a tougher position on the side of the opponents of war, and lacked the decisiveness to continue his previous course of providing support to George Bush. Furthermore, the Russian president could not afford to back the U.S. over Iraq due to the forthcoming parliamentary elections in

⁷⁶ Alexander Dugin, Advisor to the Head of Duma Committee on Problems of Geopolitics and National Security, 'End of the 'Multipolar World' Dream', *Izvestia*, 12 October 2002, p. 6; Sumbayev, 'War for Iraq, Consequences for Us', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 December 2002, p. 3

⁷⁷ Alexei Usov, 'Action in Iraq Lifts all Taboo', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Supplement Dipskurier, №. 4, 3 March 2003, p. 9

⁷⁸ On Putin's standing in the Russian society, Roy Medvedev, *Putin- The Acting President*, (Moscow: Vremya, 2002), pp. 302-309

⁷⁹ Lidia Andrusenko, Olga Tropkina, 'Misalliance with America', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 September 2002, pp. 1, 2

December 2003, and the subsequent presidential elections in March 2004.⁸⁰ Although Putin did not have any viable challengers for his re-election, his domestic agenda depended heavily upon maintaining control over the Duma, with his Unity Party defeating the strong communist and ultranationalist factions.⁸¹

Putin's strong opposition to the war resonated with the Russian public who were suspicious of the American objectives in Iraq.⁸² In contrast to the previous Iraq crises, which caused a great wave of resentment within Russia and prompted the communist and nationalist dominated Duma to abandon all important domestic issues to discuss the country's responses to the American Iraq policy, this time, the large sections of the political establishment supported Putin's position on Iraq and refrained from any radical measures. This was clearly the case, when during the Duma session on 19 March 2003, deputies from the central factions refused to discuss the situation in Iraq, prompting the factions of the Communist party, the Agrarian-Industrial Group and Liberal Democrats to leave the hall.⁸³

Apart from the attempts to obtain concessions from the U.S., Moscow, in an effort to extract maximum benefits from its position, perceived the renewed Iraq crisis as an opportunity to advance its interests in the post-Soviet space, by using Baghdad as an instrument in its relations with the U.S. This tactic was not new, as already in 1999, Russia attempted to exchange its position with regard to Iraq for the U.S. lenience with regard to its policies in Chechnya. This time,

⁸⁰ 'The Conflict Will Assist the Election PR', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 21 March 2001, p. 2

⁸¹ Editorial, 'Putin Takes Us Back to the Future', *Moscow Times*, 15 March 2004, p. 1

⁸² As demonstrated by a number of Public Opinion Polls in Russia by the Public Opinion Foundation, for example, *The U.S. or Iraq: Which Side are We On?*, 19 September 2002, available online at: http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/international_relations/Iraq_war/ed023732, viewed on 30 May 2006; *Is It a War for Oil?*, 10 February 2003, http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/international_relations/Iraq_war/eof030501, viewed on 30 May 2006

⁸³ 'There is No Foreign War', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 March 2003, p. 1

Moscow sought to obtain Washington's acknowledgement of the Kremlin's concerns with regard to Chechen terrorists in Georgia⁸⁴ in return for considering toughening the rules on inspections in Iraq.⁸⁵

In an effort to align Russia's fight against terrorism with the U.S. campaign against Iraq, Putin at the anniversary of 11 September threatened to launch an attack on Pankisi Gorge on the Chechen border to drive out the rebels, claiming they were using the area as a safe haven from which to launch operations in Chechnya.⁸⁶ However, Russia's strike on villages in the gorge in August 2002, and its plans of a pre-emptive strikes citing Article 5 of the U.N. Charter which provided for the right of collective defence, prompted a harsh criticism in the White House that demanded respect for the former Soviet republic's sovereignty.⁸⁷

Consequently, in an effort to obtain support for its operation in Georgia, the Russian Defence Minister during his trip to Washington forwarded to the CIA, the National Security Agency and the U.S. Secretary of Defence 'irrevocable' evidence of some Georgian officials' direct implication in ties with Chechen rebels on the Georgian territory.⁸⁸ Even though Moscow was reluctant to admit publicly that Russia would be willing to soften its position on Iraq in return for the American support of its campaign in Georgia,⁸⁹ the media speculated that Moscow and Washington had reached an agreement by which Putin 'would turn a blind eye' to the U.S. operation in Iraq in return for the same policy by George

⁸⁴ Traynor, *The Guardian*, 12 September 2002, p. 2

⁸⁵ Toby Harnden, Ben Aris, 'Putin Bows to Blair and Bush over Iraq Resolution', *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 September 2002, p. 20

⁸⁶ Harnden, Aris, *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 September 2002, p. 20

⁸⁷ Paton Walsh, Nicholas Watt, 'Russia Lifts Objections After Chechen Deal', *The Guardian*, 24 September 2002, p. 5

⁸⁸ Interview with Sergei Ivanov by PBS Newshour, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/july-dec02/russia_9-20.html

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Bush with regard to Russia's campaign in Georgia.⁹⁰

On a larger scale, Moscow attempted to use the Iraq crisis to advance its cherished idea of the 'multipolar world', that was to replace the American unilateralism in international affairs. Therefore, Russia readily exhibited its participation in the anti-war camp, dominated by France and Germany, and enthusiastically supported the French proposals for Iraq's disarmament at the U.N. Security Council. In fact, President Putin used every occasion to emphasise the increased co-operation between Moscow and its European allies. Speaking to journalists after the talks with the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder on 10 February 2003, the Russian president declared that the positions of the three countries on the Iraqi problem 'do essentially coincide. We do not see a reason for the use of force and unilateral action could only bring suffering to millions of people and lead to the escalation of the situation in the region'.⁹¹ Arriving in France the same day, Putin demonstratively emphasised, 'we are against the war'.⁹²

The common position of the three nations was summarised in the joint declaration on Iraq, which declared their determination 'to ensure that everything possible is done to disarm Iraq peacefully' and proclaimed their preference for the 'continuation of the inspections and a substantial reinforcement of their human and technical capacities through all possible means and in liaison with the inspectors'.⁹³ In an interview with *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, when asked whether

⁹⁰ Shepherd, 'U.S. Tempts Russia with profits from Ousting Saddam', *The Times*, 13 September 2002, p. 13

⁹¹ Vladimir Markushin, 'Europe Does Not Intend to Give Up Its Interests', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 11 February 2003, p. 1

⁹² Charles Bremner, 'Moscow Joins Paris-Bonn Peace Pact', *The Times*, 11 February 2003, p. 12

⁹³ Joint Declaration from Russia, Germany and France, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 February 2003, available online at: <http://www.iraqwatch.org/government/Russia/russiarussia-mfa-withfrancegermany-021103.htm>, viewed on 3 May 2006

the Joint Declaration with Germany and France could be viewed as a breakthrough in Europe's relations with Russia, Putin indeed asserted that it could be seen 'as the first step towards multipolar world'.⁹⁴ He argued that 'no one wants the war, and if we continue to work consequently and delicately, maybe the number of supporters of this position will increase', adding that 'maybe, we would be able to persuade our American partners'.

Putin's European orientation during the Iraq crisis not only allowed Moscow to counterbalance the U.S., and to appease the domestic opposition which disapproved of close relations with Washington, but also to demonstrate its peaceful intentions to the Arab world, and to improve its standing in the region. In the aftermath of 11 September, the Russian diplomacy had not spared efforts to develop and strengthen political, economic and cultural ties with the Gulf states,⁹⁵ opening a new chapter in relations previously marked by a historical legacy of hostility and suspicion. At the same time, the considerable cooling off in the U.S. relations with the Arab world, accused of constituting a centre for international terrorist activities, also turned Russia into a desirable political and economic partner for the Middle Eastern political élite.⁹⁶ In addition, Moscow's importance as the second largest oil producing country, able to substitute for the Arab oil in case of a major crisis in the region, increased the need for co-operation on the part

⁹⁴ Alexander Gamov, 'To Tell the Truth, No One Wants a War in Iraq', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 13 February 2003, p. 2

⁹⁵ Nikolai Gorshkov, 'Putin's Vision of "Great Russia"', *BBC News*, 15 April 2003, available online at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/europe/3034911.stm>, viewed 6 September 2003

⁹⁶ Hindawi Hussain, 'Saudis Look for Better Ties with Russia', *The Washington Times*, 11 July 2003, available online at: <http://washingtontimes.com/upi-breaking/20030711-022920-7020r.htm>, viewed 8 September 2003

of OPEC, and in particular, on the part of the world's larger oil producer, Saudi Arabia.⁹⁷

Throughout the Iraq crisis and in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Moscow therefore maintained contact with the governments of the Gulf, conducting consultations and exchanging views on the situation regarding Iraq.⁹⁸ The array of diplomatic activities between Moscow and the Gulf states culminated in the historic three-day visit to Moscow of the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah in September 2003,⁹⁹ which introduced a new phase of co-operation between the two countries. The visit resulted in the signature of a five-year co-operation agreement in the oil and gas sector aimed at stabilising oil prices, which had the potential to deals worth up to US\$25 billion, and opened the way for large Russian energy companies to conclude partnership agreements with Saudi Arabia.¹⁰⁰

At the same time, in an effort to balance his participation in the anti-war camp with his ambition to preserve its strategic partnership with the U.S., the Russian president adopted a wait-and-see policy. Putin left it to his ministers to make strong statements on Iraq, while he himself in his infrequent declarations on the issue was eager to please both sides, by on one hand arguing that the inspectors ought to be given more time and that a political settlement of the crisis

⁹⁷ On Russian-Saudi relations before September 11, Mark N. Katz, 'Saudi-Russian Relations in the Putin Era', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 55, No.4, autumn 2001, pp. 603-622

⁹⁸ 'Russian-Saudi Consultations on International and Regional Problems', *Press Release* 1449-20-06-2003 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 20 June 2003, available online at: <http://www.mid.ru>, viewed 5 September 2003; 'On Russian-Omani Consultations', *Press Release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, 4 July 2003, available online at: <http://ln.mid.ru>, viewed 2 September 2003

⁹⁹ Sophie Lambroschini, 'Russia: Saudi Sate Visit to Moscow Forges New Ties Based on Oil, Global Politics', *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 2 September 2003, available online at: <http://www.rferl.org/features/2003/09/0292003165812.asp>, viewed 4 September 2003

¹⁰⁰ In a joint statement the Saudi leader and the Russian President agreed on 'the need to interact in oil policy to achieve stability and predictability' in the global oil market. More details in 'Saudi Leader's Visit to Russia Brings Key Oil Accord, Closer Ties', *CDI Russia Weekly*, 4 September 2003, available online at: <http://cdi.org/russia/272-10.cfm>, viewed on 6 September 2003

ought to be found,¹⁰¹ and on the other hand by declaring that he did not ‘exclude the fact that Russia could change its position’ towards undefined tougher measures if Iraq was obstructive.¹⁰²

Following the second report to the Security Council by Hans Blix on 14 February 2003, in which the UNMOVIC chairman declared that the inspectors had not found any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but only a small number of empty chemical munitions which should have been declared and destroyed, and also stated that many weapons were not accounted for,¹⁰³ Putin tried to find a balance between the Anglo-American and the Franco-German approaches.¹⁰⁴ On one hand, Moscow joined the Franco-German memorandum of 24 February on the necessity to continue inspections, which stated that ‘while suspicion remains, no evidence has been given that Iraq still possesses weapons of mass destruction or capabilities in this field’.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, Russia announced that it was willing to work on a new resolution aimed at authorising Iraq’s disarmament by force, but ‘on the basis that would mean not a step to war, but a step to further work, including that of the inspectors, for the disarmament of Iraq’.¹⁰⁶

As a result of the dilemma posed by its desire to co-operate with the U.S., Moscow, contrary to its established position as the leader of the opposition against the tough Anglo-American policy at the U.N. Security Council during the previous Iraq crises, this time remained in the background. Instead, it preferred to

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Verlin, Nikolai Zlobin, ‘Moscow is Giving In to Washington’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 January 2003, p. 5

¹⁰³ Hans Blix, ‘We Need Evidence Weapons Were Destroyed’, *The Times*, 15 February 2003, p. 18

¹⁰⁴ Usborne, ‘United Nations: Russian Condemns U.S. for Adding Pressure on Weapons Inspectors’, *The Independent*, 21 February 2003, p. 2

¹⁰⁵ John Hooper, Ian Black, ‘A Triple Alliance Puts Case for Delay: U.N. Resolution European Axis Proposes Route to Peaceful Solution as Bush and Blair See Fast-Track to Conflict’, *The Guardian*, 25 February 2003, p. 5

¹⁰⁶ Svetlana Babayeva, Yevgeny Bovt, ‘Peacekeepers Prepare for War’, *Izvestia*, 27 February 2003, p. 1

render support to French proposals for a peaceful settlement, without claiming the leading role. Only once during the crisis, on 26 October 2002, did Russia take the initiative by presenting the Security Council with its own draft resolution on Iraq, which removed the most rigorous inspections terms advocated by the U.S. and contained no clear consequences, or threat of consequences if Iraq refused to comply.¹⁰⁷ Speaking about the Russian proposal, the deputy U.N. Ambassador, Gennady Gatilov, stated that Russia offered its proposal ‘to illustrate that there are some other ideas about how we can deal with the Iraqi situation, and what we can do in order to send the inspectors back on the ground as soon as possible’.¹⁰⁸

Russia’s concern about U.S. unilateralism was also expressed in Moscow’s ambition to preserve the issue of Iraq within the framework of the U.N., which since the Gorbachov era was perceived as the main forum to pursue Russia’s interests. Consequently, following its initial refusal to place Iraq on the top of the agenda in the ‘war on terror’, Russia by March 2002 refrained from threatening to pull out of the coalition against terror if the U.S. attacked Iraq. Foreign minister Ivanov in an interview with *The Times* declared that ‘it would not be expedient to issue any ultimatums to say that we would withdraw from the coalition’, adding that ‘Participation in the coalition is not a present or gift to give to someone, but in our own interests’.¹⁰⁹

To keep the Iraq issue on the collective track, Moscow, after initial reservations, agreed to support the adoption of a new resolution on Iraq advocated

¹⁰⁷ Full text of Russia’s draft resolution on Iraq of 23 October 2002 in Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Iraq Resources, available online at:

<http://www.iraqcrisis.co.uk/resources.php?idtag=R3DC8FDEADFCF3>, viewed on 17 April 2006

¹⁰⁸ Colum Lynch, ‘At U.N., Russia Challenges U.S. on Iraq’, *Washington Post*, 26 October 2002, p. 20

¹⁰⁹ Binyon, ‘Russia ‘Will Stand by Coalition if Iraq is Attacked’’, *The Times*, 15 March 2002, overseas news

by the U.S. and supported by Britain.¹¹⁰ However, as demonstrated by the numerous declarations of the Russian government, it had never wholeheartedly supported the idea of a new resolution on Iraq because it imposed additional, tougher terms for Iraq's compliance with the U.N. and did not correspond to its ambition to having the sanctions lifted. Instead, Russia regarded the work on a new resolution as a means of engaging the U.S. in the international framework of the U.N., where Moscow's position still mattered, and where American ambitions were checked by other permanent members, notably France and China, which like Russia were opposed the U.S. unilateralism.

Explaining the Russian vote for the Resolution 1441 unanimously adopted on 8 November 2002, the Russian representative at the U.N., Lavrov, in his statement declared that Russia 'made its choice based on the principle to support the resolution, guided by its special responsibility, as a permanent member of the Security Council, for the maintenance of international peace and security.'¹¹¹ Hinting at the main reason for Moscow's support of the resolution, Lavrov emphasised that 'what is most important, is that the resolution...opens the road towards further work in the interests of a political diplomatic settlement'. Implicitly referring to the U.S. readiness to undertake a unilateral action against Iraq, the Russian representative underlined that the

Implementation of the resolution will require goodwill on the part of all those involved in the process of seeking a settlement of the Iraqi question. They must have the willingness to concentrate on moving forward towards the declared common goals, not yielding to the temptation of unilateral

¹¹⁰ Shumilin, 'Condemn Saddam', *Izvestia*, 17 September 2002, p. 7

¹¹¹ Explanation of Vote on Resolution 1441, Statement by Ambassador Sergei Lavrov of Russian Federation, 8 November 2002, RUSI Iraq Resources, available online at: <http://www.iraqcrisis.co.uk/resources.php?idtag=R3EB293F8B4A62>, viewed on 17 April 2006

interpretation of the resolution's provisions and preserving the consensus and unity of all members of the Security Council.¹¹²

Further revealing Moscow's preoccupation with American unilateralism with regard to the Iraqi crisis, President Putin during the meeting with George Bush in St. Petersburg on 22 November 2002, argued that 'positive results' in disarming Iraq could be gained if both countries acted 'jointly', urging Washington to remain within the framework of the resolution 1441.¹¹³ In this spirit, both presidents in the Joint Russian-American Statement on Iraq pledged their 'full support for the implementation of the Security Council resolution 1441', expressed their 'firm support' for the work of UNMOVIC and the IAEA, and called on Iraq 'to co-operate fully and unconditionally in its disarmament obligations or face serious consequences'.¹¹⁴ Similarly, speaking at the Security Council meeting on 'Combating Terrorism' on 20 January, Russian foreign minister, Ivanov, in his statement, addressing the fight against international terrorism, argued that 'we must be careful not to take unilateral steps that might threaten the unity of the anti-terrorist coalition'.¹¹⁵ He reiterated that Russia favoured a political settlement of the Iraqi question, 'in strict conformity with the relevant Security Council resolutions'.¹¹⁶

Interestingly, in spite of the general sense of resignation at the Security Council on the question of Iraq by March 2003, Russia, even at this point,

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Paton Walsh, Jonathan Steele, 'Russia Tells U.S. to Stick to U.N. Script', *The Guardian*, 23 November 2002, p. 17

¹¹⁴ Full text of the Statement, Office of the U.S. Press Secretary, available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/11/print/20021122-1.html>, viewed on 18 April 2006

¹¹⁵ Statement of Igor Ivanov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Security Council, 4688th meeting, 20 January 2003, S/PV.4688, provisional verbatim transcript

¹¹⁶ Verlin, 'Disagreements in the U.N. on Iraq', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 22 January 2003, p. 6

appeared to have believed that war could still be avoided, or at least delayed, and remained determined to find a political compromise. It seized every opportunity, such as Iraq's delivery of a 25-page document on its VX gas programmes to the inspectors, as a proof of Iraq's co-operation with the U.N, and a confirmation that inspections ought to continue.¹¹⁷ It also seemed that President Putin believed that considering his personal friendship with George Bush and the newly forged strategic alliance between Russia and the U.S., the latter would refrain from unilateral actions which would offend Moscow.¹¹⁸ Therefore, when Washington withdrew the draft resolution from vote on 17 March 2003, just before the closed-door Security Council session on the question was due to begin, Putin, after weeks of silence, at the meeting with spiritual leaders of Chechnya declared that a war without a U.N. approval 'would be fraught with the gravest consequences, will result in casualties and destabilise the international situation in general.'¹¹⁹ He reiterated that Russia 'stands for resolving the problem exclusively through peaceful means', emphasising that 'any other option would be a mistake'.¹²⁰

At the same time, indicating that he was not prepared to worsen Russia's relations with the U.S. because of the disagreements on Iraq, the Russian president in a telephone conversation with Bush on 18 March, expressed Russia's regret about Washington's ultimatum to Iraq,¹²¹ but according to a statement issued by the Kremlin press service, 'both parties emphasised that despite differences in approaches and assessments, bilateral ties in critical situations similar to the

¹¹⁷ Usborne, 'On the Eve of War: A War of Words in the Azores, As Our Troops Prepare for Battle', *Independent on Sunday*, 16 March 2003, p. 2

¹¹⁸ Leonid Mlechin, *Putin, Bush and the War in Iraq*, (Moscow: EKSMO, 2005), p. 593

¹¹⁹ Verlin, 'On the Eve', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 18 March 2003, p. 1

¹²⁰ Yusin, 'Peace Ended', *Izvestia*, 18 March 2003, pp. 1, 2

¹²¹ Verlin, Andrei Terekhov, 'Allies in the Expectation of Terror Acts', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2 March 2003, p. 4

current one are of special importance.’¹²² At the same time, yet again demonstrating Moscow’s policy of balancing between the U.S. and its European allies, Russia in the Security Council joined France in condemning the move towards the war on Iraq, with the Russian foreign minister declaring that the Anglo-American actions were violating the U.N. Charter and arguing that previous resolutions were directed at Iraq’s disarmament, and not regime change.¹²³

Following the beginning of the U.S. air strikes on Baghdad on 20 March 2003, President Putin, expressing his frustration with Washington, in his declaration in the Kremlin emphasised that the military operation was ‘conducted against the world public opinion, against the principles and norms of international law and the U.N. Charter.’¹²⁴ He argued that the military action ‘cannot be justified by anything, not by the accusations against Iraq in the support of international terrorism, (we have never had such information in this regard), nor by the ambition to change the political regime in this country’. Declaring the war against Iraq ‘a big political mistake’, Putin, in line with the established Russian position, argued that the central role in the settlement of the Iraqi conflict ought to be given to the U.N. Security Council, and asserted that Russia intended to return the situation onto a political path to achieve the Iraqi settlement on the basis of the Security Council resolutions’.

On a larger scale, Moscow’s frustration about its inability to prevent a military operation against Iraq, and more importantly, about its failure to preserve

¹²² Henley, Hooper, Sophia Arie, Paton Walsh, ‘Europe: Critics Renew Their Attacks and Warnings’, *The Guardian*, 19 March 2003, p. 2

¹²³ Osborne, ‘The Iraq Conflict: U.N. Opposition; Warmongers Must Bear the Cost of an Illegal Conflict, Council Members Warn’, *The Independent*, 20 March 2003, p. 6

¹²⁴ ‘Vladimir Putin: War in Iraq Is a Political Mistake’, Declaration of the Russian President, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 21 March 2003, pp. 1, 4

its major economic interests in that country, demonstrated Russia's strategic weakness, and the continuing loss of its superpower status despite Putin's attempts to boost Moscow's international standing. At the same time, Russian responses to the Iraq crisis indicated that Baghdad continued to play a special role in Russia's Middle Eastern policy and remained an indicator of Russia's policy in the region.

On the domestic level, Iraq had highlighted the debates within Russia concerning the country's foreign policy orientation, demonstrating Moscow's desire to integrate with Europe, while further expanding its partnership with the U.S. In addition, Russia's policies during the Iraq crisis once again showed that Moscow continued to regard Baghdad as an instrument in its relations with the U.S., willing to exchange its interests in Iraq for larger concessions offered by Washington. However, a series of miscalculations on the part of the Russian government, which underestimated the U.S. determination to settle the Iraq issue once and for all with or without Moscow's support, meant that Russia was left out from the participation in the reconstruction of Iraq in the aftermath of 'Provide Freedom', and had lost Iraq as its economic and political ally.

CONCLUSION

Following the start of the war in Iraq in March 2003, political commentator Yevgeny Satanovsky, observed: ‘What we, as Russia, want, greatly differs from what we can....We can have great ambitions, but no one really believes we can realise them’.¹ This is particularly true with regard to Iraq, where, contrary to its declared objectives, Russia failed to prevent the first Gulf War, obtain the lifting of sanctions against Baghdad in the U.N. Security Council and stop the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which led to the loss of one of its most important Cold War allies in the Middle East.

This thesis has provided a comprehensive account of Russia’s Iraq policy during the 1990s and has shown that Moscow lacked the means to achieve its foreign policy objectives. By examining the role of Iraq in Russian politics, it has demonstrated that Russian-Iraqi relations can be used as a case study for the examination of post-Soviet Russia in general, and its foreign policy in particular.

The present study has also shown that in spite of the de-ideologisation of external strategy and the reconstruction of the theoretical framework first initiated by Mikhail Gorbachov in the late 1980s, Russia’s foreign policy goals throughout the 1990s greatly resembled Soviet ones – namely, the extension of Moscow’s power; the limitation of the U.S. global influence; and the elimination of pretexts for U.S. military involvement in any part of the world. As during the Cold War, Washington, in the first decade following the Soviet collapse, remained the single most important external reference for Russia’s new foreign policy.

¹Yevgeny Satanovsky, ‘Another Re-division of the World is Coming’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Dippkurier (supplement), №5, 24 March 2003, pp. 9, 13

In that sense, Moscow's Iraq policy can be largely viewed as a function of Russian-U.S. relations. In the early post-Soviet years, Moscow's need for U.S. political support and economic assistance resulted in a pro-American foreign policy and Russia's backing of Washington's tough stance on Iraq. However, the consolidation of the Russian state by the mid-1990s led to the modification of the country's foreign policy course towards a more assertive and independent approach. Moscow's shift to the right reflected the change in the correlation of forces within the Russian government, brought about by the failure of Yeltsin's shock therapy, which led to the replacement of radical reformers with the old bureaucracy as well as increased pressure from opposition parties and various powerful interest groups. Moscow began to distance itself from the U.S. position on Iraq and became increasingly active in mediating between Baghdad and the U.N., albeit with mixed success.

By the late 1990s, Russia's newly found assertiveness and pragmatism in foreign affairs, together with its willingness to risk tensions with U.S. to achieve its foreign policy objectives, resulted in Moscow's bitter opposition to the U.S. stance with regard to the Iraq question, and its attempts to undermine the U.N. sanctions regime, as illustrated, for example, by the opening of direct air travel between Moscow and Baghdad.

At the same time, Moscow repeatedly indicated that it was prepared to accommodate the U.S. policy in Iraq in exchange for U.S. support on issues, such as Chechnya, Georgia and Washington's acknowledgment of former Soviet republics as part of Russia's sphere of interests. Similarly, during the second Iraq crisis in 2002-2003, Russia was willing to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq in

exchange for Washington's guarantees for the preservation of its existing contracts with Baghdad.

The study of Iraq's role in Russian domestic and foreign policies has also highlighted the growing importance of analysing Russia's political landscape when examining foreign policy issues. Since the Gorbachov era, strong domestic opposition exercised great influence on the conduct of the country's foreign policy in the attempt to undermine the Kremlin government. As the analysis of Russia's Iraq policy has demonstrated, the opposition, by urging a more aggressive and assertive policy on Iraq, was not concerned with allegiance to the erstwhile Soviet ally and the long-standing friendship with Saddam Hussein. Rather, it was expressing frustration with the decline of Russia's superpower status and the break with Soviet imperial thinking, as well as the refusal to accept the replacement of the bipolarity with the new unipolar world order.

Considering the pronounced anti-Americanism prevailing in Russia, Washington's disregard for Russia and its attempt to assume the role of an enforcer in the region where Moscow had substantial interests, rallied various sections across Russia's political spectrum, and more than any other foreign, or even domestic policy issue, mobilised the Russian population. Iraq became a symbol of Russia's assertiveness in the international arena and a barometer of the country's recovery from the politico-economic crisis of the early post-Soviet years. The Kremlin's foreign policy success and failure was increasingly measured by its ability to oppose U.S. policy on Iraq, with the parliamentary debates concerning the unilateral abolishment of the U.N. sanctions constituting the apogee of Russia's attempts to conduct an independent foreign policy.

However, the notion that ‘what’s good for America, is not necessary good for Russia’² did not mean there existed a generally accepted idea of what was good for Russia. In contrary, debates on Iraq have highlighted the lack of vision with regard to the country’s long-term strategy and the friction within Russia with regard to the country’s foreign policy orientation between those who have been willing to sacrifice Iraq for the full-fledged integration with the West and those who have been ambitious to re-establish Moscow’s superpower status at any cost.

The issue of Iraq has also revealed the conflicting interests of various interest groups within Russian politics and their impact on foreign policy formation. Whereas Russian diplomats were anxious to maintain Russia’s image as a balanced power in international affairs, the recovering military industrial complex and the growing financial industrial groups were eager to obtain favourable conditions for co-operation with Iraq. This resulted in political activity which appeared contradictory and erratic. While Russian representatives at the U.N. voted in support of tough measures with regard to Iraq, Russian businessmen, with Kremlin’s blessing, travelled to Baghdad to sign advantageous economic agreements aimed at securing Moscow’s position in that country in the aftermath of the UN embargo.

Indeed, Moscow’s co-operation with Iraq proved fruitful: following the establishment of the U.N. ‘oil for food programme’ in 1996, Russia received the ‘most favoured nation’ status in purchasing Iraqi oil, while Russian, political entities, but also individuals, greatly profited from this system, which allowed Saddam Hussein to reward his supporters through oil vouchers and concessions.

² Alexei Arbatov, ‘Foreign Policy Consensus in Russia’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 14 March 1997, p. 5

As this thesis has shown, Baghdad was therefore of great significance to Russia not only symbolically, but, in contrast to many other former Soviet clients in the Third World, politically and economically. In conditions of a deep economic crisis, Baghdad's willingness to repay its billions of dollars of debts to Russia and the prospects of participation in the reconstruction of the Iraq's shattered economy resonated well not only with the political establishment and the business community, but also with the general population.

During the second Gulf crisis it was commercial considerations such as these that prompted Russia to search for ways to safeguard its interests in Iraq. For the first time Moscow entered in contact with the Iraqi opposition in an attempt to minimise the damage to its position in Iraq in case of a regime change and to obtain guarantees for the preservation of its existing contracts with Baghdad. Even though Russian diplomats subsequently tried to downplay the significance of the talks, this episode, together with attempts to negotiate with Washington on the same issue, highlights the opportunistic nature of Russia's Iraq policy, something that this thesis has addressed throughout.

Finally, this study has demonstrated that Russia's Iraq policy has been marked by a series of miscalculations and the failure of the Russian government to understand the dramatic changes in international affairs following the disintegration of the USSR.

One of the main miscalculations on the part of Moscow was the misunderstanding of Iraq's role in U.S. foreign policy. As much as Iraq was a symbol for Russia's new foreign policy in the post-Cold War world, for Washington, Baghdad became an emblem for the new world order marked by American primacy. To the U.S., disarming Iraq and forcing it to obey to the rules

imposed by the international community was a question of principle that could not be compromised by its nascent partnership with Russia, at a time when, excluding few cases, such as the pressure applied to Washington by the Russian government, in postponing the ratification of the START-II Treaty, Moscow's bargaining position with regard to the U.S. remained relatively weak.

Whereas Moscow needed the U.S. for its transition to a market economy and for its political consolidation, Moscow also required Washington's support, or at least flexibility, on a number of extremely important political issues, such as Chechnya, Georgia and Russia's position in the post-Soviet space. The significance of these issues is highlighted by the fact that Moscow was repeatedly willing to use Iraq as a bargaining chip in its negotiations with the U.S. At the same time, all Russian presidents, from Gorbachov to Putin, put greater emphasis on establishing and maintaining good personal contacts with the American leadership in the erroneous belief that undesirable policies could be averted in the name of friendship.

Russia's second miscalculation was its belief that as long as the question of Iraq stayed on the U.N. agenda, Washington would be kept on the multilateral track and could be prevented from acting unilaterally. While it was true that following the disintegration of the USSR, the U.N. remained the only international forum where Russia retained its status and some of its influence, the new constellation of forces, marked by Anglo-American dominance, meant that Moscow, despite its right of veto, could no longer oppose undesirable decisions or mobilise enough support among other members to achieve its goals. On the contrary, Russia's manoeuvring between co-operation with the international community on the issue of Iraq and attempts to protect its interests in that country

left it with an image as Baghdad's advocate and a weak link in the coalition, substantially diminishing the credibility of Moscow's diplomatic efforts in the eyes of the West.

Russia was also wrong to believe that by supporting Iraq in its challenge to U.S. power at the U.N. on such issues as the composition of UNSCOM or the work of the weapon inspectors, and by playing on the sympathies of the Secretary General Kofi Annan and other U.N. members, frustrated by the lack of progress with regard to Iraq, it could exercise pressure on the U.S. to modify its stance.

Another miscalculation on the part of the Russian diplomacy was a complete underestimation of Saddam Hussein and his willingness to oppose the U.S. even at the expense of losing power. Until the end Moscow believed that Saddam as a 'pragmatic' politician would back off from his confrontational course, if not to ease the heavy burden of the economic sanctions on his country, then to save his own regime. At the same time, Russia's Iraq policy was impeded by the fact that Iraq, despite proclamations of partnership and co-operation with Russia, used Moscow in its confrontation with the West to drive a wedge between the UN members and oppose the US. Russia's diplomatic efforts were therefore limited to Iraq's willingness to co-operate and to fulfil its promises. The episode regarding Iraq's recognition of Kuwait in 1994 allegedly obtained by Kozyrev in Baghdad and then refuted by Aziz at the UN, amply illustrated how Iraq's strategy undermined Russia's international standing.

Russia also erroneously believed that sanctions could not be maintained indefinitely, and that the growing friction among the U.N. Security Council members could result in the collapse of the embargo regime at any point. It therefore opposed any new resolutions on Iraq, anxious that they would pose new

unfulfillable demands on Baghdad. The main miscalculations on the part of Moscow during the second Gulf crisis was the belief that the U.S. would not be able to extend their military campaign to Iraq without an international mandate and that the new strategic partnership in the war on terror would prevent Washington from acting against Russia's interests.

Finally, Russia failed to comprehend the nature of the new world order that evolved following the end of the Cold War and disintegration of the USSR. Moscow believed that the bipolar world had been replaced by a multi-polar one, marked by the existence of various centres of influence, with Russia constituting one of them. While Russia acknowledged its diminished influence in international affairs, it erroneously believed that co-operation with what it perceived to be other main centres of influence, Europe and China, would create a counterbalance to the U.S. In spite of its attempts to project an image of a balanced power that adheres to international law and co-operates with the international community on pressing global matters, Russia's highly reactive policy on Iraq has shown that Moscow was guided by opportunism and a lack of vision.

In fact, in spite of a changed politico-economic situation in Russia by 2003, parallels can be drawn between Gorbachov and Putin's Iraq policies. Not only did both Russian leaders face similar limitations with regard to their Iraq policy in the form of strong domestic opposition to their co-operation with the U.S. and the resources available for the conduct of foreign policy, but also on both occasions, during the first Gulf crisis in 1990-91 and the U.S. war against Iraq in 2003, unprecedented rapprochement with Washington failed to prevent undesired policies on Iraq.

On the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Boris Nemtsov, the leader of the 'Union of Right Forces' party, in an article in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* argued that for Russia the war in Iraq was 'very serious', as it was about 'a new division of the world, and the fateful question: what place in this world will Russia take?' Russia's unsuccessful policy on Iraq, which culminated with Russia's exclusion from the reconstruction of Iraq, and de facto exclusion from all Iraqi affairs since spring 2003, has demonstrated that despite its efforts to prove otherwise, Moscow's ambitions to play a leading role in international affairs must remain limited for the foreseeable future.

Appendix A

Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq on Trade, Economic and Scientific- Technical Co-operation (Baghdad 5 August 1993)

The government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq, hereafter named the Agreeing Parties, considering their mutual ambition to expand and diversify commercial exchange and deepen economic and scientific-technical co-operation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit,

have agreed upon:

Article 1:

The Agreeing Parties will collaborate in the development of trade, economic and scientific-technical co-operation on a long-term basis.

Article 2:

The Agreeing Parties will collaborate in the development of co-operation between Russian and Iraqi organisations and companies; in the realisation of projects using modern technologies; in the modernisation and expansion of industrial objects, constructed with the assistance of the Russian side; and the creation of favourable conditions for the conclusion of contracts, in particular, those on a long-term basis between the corresponding organisations of both countries.

Article 3:

The Agreeing Parties will encourage scientific and technical organisations of their respective countries to co-operate by exchanging scientific-technical information, conducting joint research and symposiums, exchanging delegations and other similar events.

Article 4:

The Agreeing Parties offer each other the most favourable status in all spheres and in all that concerns:

Customs regulations, applied for imports and exports, including the methods of determining and collecting such custom taxes;

Regulations concerning the custom clearance, transit, storage and loading;

Taxes and all domestic taxes of any kind, collected directly or indirectly from exported goods;

Regulations relating to sale, acquisition and transportation, distribution and use of goods on the domestic market.

Each Party will offer production, originating or imported on the territory of the other Party, the same regime with regard to the application of quantity limitations and issue of licences as offered to production of any third country.

The provisions of Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the present Article will not include advantages and concessions offered at present and in the future by the Agreeing Parties:

To countries aiming to create a custom union or a free trade zone, or as a consequence of the creation of such a union or a zone;

Developing countries on the basis of international agreements;

Neighbouring countries aiming at developing border trade;

Countries - members of the Commonwealth of the Independent States, or countries of the former republics of the USSR;

Arab countries.

Article 5:

Export and import of goods and services between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Iraq will be realised on the basis of contracts, concluded by the legal and physical bodies of both countries on the basis of competition in accordance with the jurisdiction in each respective country and on the basis of the prevailing prices in the world markets.

Article 6:

Payments for commodities supply and provision of services will be conducted in the freely convertible currency if not provided for otherwise between the legal and physical bodies of the respective countries in accordance with the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Iraq.

Article 7:

Competent organs of the Agreeing Parties will offer Russian and Iraqi legal and physical bodies the required permits for the export and import of goods and services in accordance with the jurisdiction of their respective countries.

Article 8:

The Agreeing Parties will encourage participation of organisations of their respective countries in international exhibitions, fairs and seminars on the territory of the other Agreeing Party.

Article 9:

The Agreeing Parties, in accordance with their respective jurisdiction will exempt from customs and other taxes related to external economic activity:

Samples and advertising materials without commercial value;

Tools and products imported for construction, montage and repairs under guarantee of their return;

Objects and materials for the conduct of experiments and research;

Objects for fairs and exhibitions imported under obligation of return;

Special containers and packaging that are used in international trade on the basis of their return.

Article 10:

Conditions for financing, loans and payments, provided by the Russian organisations for the construction of industrial objects and commercial transactions, economic and scientific-technical co-operation will be determined on the basis of agreements between the organisations of the respective countries in each individual case separately by the signature of according contracts in the framework of the present Agreement, or on the basis of other intergovernmental agreements.

Article 11:

The Agreeing Parties will adopt all necessary measures via their interested organisations for the realisation of economic projects in Iraq, in particular in the following areas: industry and energy, oil and oil-production, agriculture and irrigation, water-management construction, transportation and communication.

The extent and volume of co-operation, related to the realisation of these projects will be determined by the interested organisations of the respective countries by the signature of according agreements, protocols and contracts separately in each individual case.

Article 12:

The Agreeing Parties will do everything in their power for the expansion and improvement of scientific-technical co-operation between the two countries in the following directions:

- a) expansion of co-operation and exchange of experience in the areas of training and preparation of national cadres;
- b) transfer to Iraq of modern technologies upon agreement by interested organisations of both countries;
- c) exchange of scientific-technical information and experience, conduct of joint scientific-technical research;
- d) exchange of scientific staff and specialists in the areas upon agreement by the Agreeing parties;
- e) encouragement of contacts between the competent organisations of both countries in the spheres of science and technology;
- f) organisation of professional-technical training and provision of studying places in the educational establishments in various subjects of economics, science and technology;
- g) exchange of teaching staff of universities and colleges, conduct of joint research;
- h) co-operation in any other areas upon agreement between the Agreeing Parties.

Article 13:

For the purpose of control over the fulfilment of the present Agreement, the Agreeing Parties will establish the Russian-Iraqi Commission on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation.

Article 14:

For the realisation of the present Agreement, the Agreeing Parties may conclude accords and protocols, and develop programmes of co-operation.

Article 15:

The present Agreement enters in force from the day of the exchange of notes via diplomatic channels, in which the Agreeing Parties inform each other in writing about the completion of internal measures necessary for its entering in force, and will remain in force until one of the Agreeing Parties informs the other Agreeing Party about its decision to terminate its application. In this case it will cease to be valid upon the end of a six-month period from the day of notice.

Following the termination of the present Agreement, its provisions will continue to apply on all contracts which had been signed in accordance with this Agreement until their complete fulfilment.

Appendix B

Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq on the Establishment of a Russian-Iraqi Commission on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation (Baghdad, 5 August 1993)

The Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq, hereafter named the Agreeing Parties,

expressing their mutual ambition to expand and diversify commercial exchange and deepen the economic and scientific-technical co-operation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit,

taking into account the jurisdiction in their respective countries,

in accordance with Article 13 of the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of Iraq on Trade, Economic and scientific-technical Co-operation of 5 August 1993,

have agreed upon the following:

Article 1:

The Agreeing Parties are establishing the Russian-Iraqi Commission on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation, hereafter named the Commission.

Article 2:

The tasks of the Commission are:

Control over the fulfilment of the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation of 5 August 1993;

Preparation of recommendations and proposals for the development of trade and its diversification, as well as for economic and scientific-technical co-operation between the two countries;

Development of recommendations and ways to remove obstacles in developing trade, economic and scientific-technical co-operation in all areas.

Article 3:

The Commission consists of the Russian and the Iraqi components and will conduct alternate meetings in the Russian Federation and in Iraq.

Upon proposals by a part of the Commission, additional meetings of the heads of the Commission and their representatives will be conducted.

Article 4:

The Commission conducts its activity in accordance with the Regulation on Commission, attached to the present Agreement and constituting its integral part.

Article 5:

The present Agreement enters in force from the day of the exchange of notes via diplomatic channels in which the Agreeing Parties inform each other in writing about the completion of internal measures, necessary for its entry in force, and will remain in force until the termination of the Agreement on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Iraq of 5 August 1993.

Appendix C

Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq on Co-operation in the Construction of Objects in the Area of Petroleum and Gas Industry (Baghdad 25 April 1995)

The Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq, hereafter named the Agreeing Parties,

expressing their mutual ambition to expand and diversify commercial exchange and deepen the economic and scientific-technical co-operation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit,

taking into account the jurisdiction in force in both countries,

ambitious to diversify economic and scientific-economic co-operation in the area of petroleum and gas industry, as well as in petroleum refining,

have agreed upon the following:

Article 1:

The Agreeing Parties will co-operate in the realisation of new projects, as well as in the modernisation and expansion of objects listed in the appendix to the present Agreement.

Competent organisations of the Agreeing Parties will study the possibilities of co-operation on any other objects in the area of petroleum and gas industry.

Article 2:

For the purpose of the realisation of the co-operation previewed by the Article 1 of the present Agreement:

Competent Russian organisations:

Will conduct necessary project-searching works;

Will supply the equipment and material produced in the Russian Federation, as well as equipment and materials produced in third countries on the conditions agreed upon with the Iraqi side;

Will realise the construction and montage, and other necessary works;

Will dispatch Russian specialists to Iraq for collection of initial data, conduct of project-research and other works, which the Iraqi side is not able to conduct on its own, for the production-technical training of Iraqi citizens, as well as montage, tuning and running of the equipment supplied by the Russian Federation.

Iraqi organisations will hand over to Russian organisations initial data, necessary for the project planning and will co-operate with the Russian organisations in the collection and preparation of other required data, provide input for the division of the volume of work to be conducted, taking into account the collected experience and their own capabilities in the conduction of works in the areas of petroleum and gas industry.

Competent Russian and Iraqi organisations will create joint Russian-Iraqi enterprises for the conduct of geological research, projects and scientific research, drilling of wells, the development and management of the oil and gas fields and will determine the precise volume of work.

The Agreeing Parties will assist their organisations in the creation of joint enterprises in the area and on objects of co-operation agreed upon by the Agreeed Parties.

Article 3:

Competent Russian and Iraqi organisations will conclude contracts on the basis of the present Agreement, in which they determine the concrete areas, objects and conditions for co-operation, previewed by the present Agreement, taking into account the legislation in force in their respective countries.

The conditions for financing will be determined by organisations of both countries in the process of negotiations on the signature of contracts on the basis of principles, laid out in the Agreement on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation between the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq of 5 August 1993, as well as in the Memorandum of 9 September 1994.

Article 4:

In all other matters, not mentioned in the present Agreement, the conditions of the Agreement on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Co-operation between the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Iraq of 5 August 1993, will apply.

Article 5:

The present Agreement enters in force from the day of the exchange of notes via diplomatic channels, in which the Agreeing Parties inform each other in writing about the completion of internal measures necessary for its entering in force, and will remain in force until one of the Agreeing Parties informs the other

Agreeing Party about its decision to terminate its application. In this case it will cease to be valid upon the end of a six-month period from the day of notice.

Following the termination of the present Agreement, its provisions will continue to apply on all contracts that had been signed in accordance with this Agreement until their complete fulfilment.

Appendix D

Attachment to the Agreement of 25 April 1995

List of Objects of Co-operation in the Area of Petroleum and Gas Industry between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Iraq

1. Development of the West Qurna oil field.
2. Modernisation and expansion of industrial capacities for collection, preparation and transportation of oil and gas, as well as water pumping at North Rumaila.
3. Construction of 6 plants for the desalination and dehydration of oil with the capacity of 8,000, 140,000 and 190,000 bar/24 hours, on the separating points 'Quraynat', 'Shamia', 'Rumaila' and Djanubia'.
4. Construction of the second stage of the oil pipeline Rumaila – Hadita, with a diameter of 1067 millimetres and the length of 232 kilometres.
5. Drilling of 100 production wells (vertical, slanting and horizontal) with the depth of 2300-5500 metres on various fields.
6. Construction of 55 reservoirs with the volume of 100 cubic metres to 82,000 cubic metres for the storage of oil and oil products.
7. Supply of equipment and materials for drilling, development and capital repairs of wells.
8. Supply of equipment and spare parts for the existing objects for the system of water pumping at the North Rumaila oil field.

9. All other objects in the area of exploration and transportation of oil and gas which will be agreed upon by the competent Russian and Iraqi organisations additionally.

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